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**The hagiographic homilies of St John of Damascus  
a study in Byzantine homiletics**

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# **The Hagiographic Homilies of St John of Damascus:**

## **A Study in Byzantine Homiletics**

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Submitted for the degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy in Classics Research**

## | Abstract

This thesis focuses on a particular group of sermons delivered by the eighth-century monastic and theologian St John of Damascus. More specifically, John of Damascus' three hagiographic homilies (*Encomium of St Barbara*; *Encomium of St John Chrysostom*; *Passion of St Artemius*) are translated and analysed to provide a model for the treatment of the homiletic literature of the middle Byzantine period.

The originality of the study lies in the astute and coherent close reading of the corpus. Sensitive to the lack of contextual information with regard both to the homilies and the preacher himself, an attempt is made to bring to the surface the wealth of content and meaning contained in these texts and flesh out aspects of the sermons which are otherwise neglected or insufficiently understood. This is also the first thorough study of John of Damascus' writings as literature, with an emphasis on style, composition, primary sources, and intertextuality. Although the basic line of approach can be said to be literary, the thesis touches on a number of areas and themes, such as theology, hagiography and asceticism, power and political authority, and approaches to the 'self', all of which demonstrate the intricacy of John's sermons.

The study begins with an examination of the circumstances in which the homilies were delivered (chapter 1). In chapter 2 the focus moves to John Damascene's use of literary sources and their decisive influence on his hagiographic encomia. Chapter 3 then proceeds to discuss the insight that homilies provide into John's diffusion of family and monastic ideals into the personal lives of the faithful. From that point attention shifts to John's efforts to create negative models of political authority and heresy as a means of alluding to politically driven religious disputes affecting contemporary Christians at community level (chapter 4). Finally, the homilies are approached as reflections of the preacher's self, a literary space for the expression of thought and emotion revealing John's view of himself as a monk, theologian, and preacher (chapter 5). The last three chapters comprise the translations of the three homilies.

## | Acknowledgements

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# PART I

## | Introduction

St John of Damascus is a rare example of a late father of the eastern Church who exercised a strong influence on both eastern and western theological thought and whose work as an ecclesiastical writer received widespread acceptance over the centuries.<sup>1</sup> Today the writings of ‘the theologian who recapitulated patristic tradition, either dogmatic or ethical, in the most definitive systematic way’<sup>2</sup> continue to appeal to scholars for their comprehensiveness and insight. The *On the Orthodox Faith*, John’s compendious account of Christian dogma and belief, has an imposing presence on the literary landscape he created. Complemented by his *Dialectica* and the *On Heresies*, it comprises the tripartite *The Fountain Head of Knowledge*, which, along with his dogmatic and polemical writings, has been the subject of intense scholarly scrutiny.<sup>3</sup> Two further aspects of John’s writing activity, which testify to his creative ingenuity and venturesome character as a theologian, have attracted increased attention in modern scholarship: his involvement in the dispute over the veneration of icons

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<sup>1</sup> For a recent discussion of the reception of John of Damascus in Byzantium and its periphery, and the West, see Adrahtas 2015: 265-71.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.* 265. Also Louth 1998: 247: ‘St John of Damascus is known to history principally as the greatest epitomist of Patristic theology.’

<sup>3</sup> Numerous books and articles deal with questions of theological and philosophical method and scope in John of Damascus’ writings. Louth 2002 remains the only comprehensive monograph to date that explores the major areas of John’s thought across his dogmatic and polemical treatises. It is supplemented by several other studies which focus on more specific aspects of his work. Here I will cite the most recent according to subject. See, on John’s trinitarian theology and Christology: Blowers 2012; Gleede 2012: 174-81; Twombly 2015; on his reliance on and reading of philosophical and Aristotelian concepts: Zhyrkova 2009; *id.* 2010; Erismann 2011; del Campo Echevarría 2013; Ables 2015; on his cosmology: Biriukov 2016. Several discussions of John of Damascus’ work and thought are also included in Kontouma 2015, a volume of collected studies published between 1995 and 2011. Still useful for reference are two older monographs, Langen 1879 and Lupton 1882. For an older survey of research on John of Damascus, see Hoeck 1951: 5-60. A recent overview of his works and available editions is provided by Kontouma 2015: I.30-43.

and his engagement with Islam.<sup>4</sup> Theology, however, is only one of the pillars on which his reputation rested. The poetic legacy of John of Damascus has always been a hallmark of his extensive *oeuvre*, to the extent that ‘within a few centuries of his death he was thought of as *the* liturgical poet’.<sup>5</sup> Even though authoritative studies on the authenticity of the liturgical poetry attributed to him and the precise form of his contribution to Byzantine hymnography are still lacking, his name was inextricably linked, among other things, to the development of the hymnographical genre of the iambic canon.<sup>6</sup>

Yet there is a less conspicuous, but no less important, aspect of the tradition surrounding John of Damascus to which neither later reception nor modern research have done full justice. Apart from an acute theological mind and a poetic talent, John seems to have possessed a natural eloquence that would earn him the epithet χρυσορροάς (‘flowing with gold’), as the chronographer Theophanes testifies.<sup>7</sup> John himself would employ the same adjective to describe the ‘λόγων προχοήν χρυσόρροον’, the gold-flowing stream of words, that should be offered to another extraordinary preacher, St John Chrysostom, the ‘Golden Mouth’, as he mentions in his encomium to the saint.<sup>8</sup> As we will see later, his choice of wording was not without symbolic overtones: it would seem that the Damascene identified signs of shared experience with the saint. But despite his fame as a rhetor, the sermons that have come down to us under John of Damascus’ name are indeed very few. B. Kotter’s edition of John’s homiletic work includes fifteen homilies, of which he accepts the attribution

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<sup>4</sup> On John’s response to Iconoclasm see Louth 2002: 193-222; id. 2003 (translation with introduction); Flusin 2006; Déroche 2015; Pallis 2015; id. 2017. There are several scholarly investigations into John of Damascus’ contact with Islam: Sahas 1972; Le Coz 1992; Hoyland 1997: 480-89; Janosik 2016; Schadler 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Louth 2002: 252.

<sup>6</sup> For a summary of the background that led to the emergence of the canon and for a literary commentary of some of the canons attributed to John, see Louth 2002: 252-82. The question of authenticity has been addressed in Skrekas 2008.

<sup>7</sup> Theophanes, *Chronographia* A.M. 6221; see Louth 2002: 6.

<sup>8</sup> *Chrys.* 1.3.



of ten.<sup>9</sup> They may be divided into three groups: exegetical, festal, and hagiographic (panegyric).<sup>10</sup> The latter group, in particular, which includes the above encomium to John Chrysostom, provides an unparalleled glimpse into the ‘gold-flowing’ John Damascene and his world, as will be seen in the course of this study.

John’s homilies have only recently begun to receive the attention they deserve. In his monograph on John of Damascus, A. Louth devotes a separate chapter to the Damascene’s identity as a preacher.<sup>11</sup> The author prefaces his discussion with some preliminary but crucial remarks on general aspects of the homilies, such as audience, liturgical occasion, and elements of content and structure, before turning to a more detailed analysis of two case studies, the *Homily on the Transfiguration* and the three *Homilies on the Dormition of the Mother of God*. His examination, which concentrates on the weighted assessment of the homilist’s rhetorical skill and theological exposition, constitutes the only relatively extensive and thorough treatment of John’s festal homilies and homiletic production in general.<sup>12</sup> The *Homilies on the Dormition*, delivered as a trilogy in the course of an all-night vigil, and the *Homily on the Nativity of the Mother of God* attributed to John, are often used as sources of evidence for the development of Marian devotion.<sup>13</sup> Yet individual treatment of John’s homilies is still at an early stage.

The same is true of his hagiographic homilies, which have not yet been the subject of any substantial scholarly investigation. Two very brief discussions can be found in publications

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<sup>9</sup> To Bonifatius Kotter we owe the most recent and complete edition of John of Damascus’ homilies (Kotter 1988), which will be followed in this study.

<sup>10</sup> Exegetical: homily *On the fig-tree*; festal: *On Holy Saturday*, *On the Nativity of the Lord*, *On the Transfiguration*, three homilies *On the Dormition of the Mother of God*; panegyric: the *Encomium of St Barbara*, the *Encomium of St John Chrysostom*, the *Passion of St Artemius*. Some scholars also accept the *Homily on the Nativity of the Mother of God* also as genuine: e.g. Louth 2002: 226.

<sup>11</sup> Louth 1998; id. 2002: 223-49.

<sup>12</sup> Louth 2002: 234-43, 243-49.

<sup>13</sup> See, for instance, the contributions by Louth 2011 and Cunningham 2011a in the volume on the cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium (Brubaker and Cunningham 2011). See further Kazhdan 1999: 80-4; Cunningham 2004; id. 2008a: 44-5, 71-84.

by A. Kazhdan and S. Efthymiadis.<sup>14</sup> The first is an enquiry into the motives that prompted John to deliver the *Encomium of St Barbara* and the *Encomium of St John Chrysostom*. Kazhdan's acute observations regarding the social and personal dimension of the homilies provide an unmistakable hint of the complex considerations that constitute the dynamic process of preaching; yet these are rather condensed to fully illustrate John's preaching mentality. Equally, Efthymiadis' short note is limited to a brief presentation of the two encomia as well as of John's third hagiographic homily, the *Passion of St Artemius*, and aims at situating John within the long tradition of Byzantine hagiography. The *Passion of St Artemius*, on the other hand, has been at the centre of many scholarly discussions for its value as a historical document for the reign of Constantius and his successor Julian, under whom St Artemius was martyred, and for its relevance to the reconstruction of the lost *Ecclesiastical History* of the fifth-century Arian historian Philostorgius. However, these have hardly served to emphasise the literary merit and homiletic character of the text, since it has principally been exploited for questions of historical interest and textual comparison.

Although overshadowed by the rest of his prose works and lacking a detailed discussion unlike, for example, his Marian homilies, John's hagiographic homilies are of particular interest for a number of reasons. They belong, first of all, to the few surviving records of John's public speaking and of his role as a homilist who addressed and interacted with his congregations. It is therefore important that they should not be neglected, as they reveal the context and internal dynamics of that encounter. They also share a common thematic ground: the recounting of the lives of saints, the praise of holiness, and the creation of exemplary models of Gospel living. As such, they display a remarkable characteristic, which makes them quite distinct in terms of style and focus compared to the rest of his homilies: they occupy a position at the confluence of two traditions with overlapping, but not identical,

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<sup>14</sup> Kazhdan 1999: 84-7; Efthymiadis 2015: 378.

development and objectives: homiletics and hagiography. While clearly rhetorical pieces, John's hagiographic sermons were hugely indebted to the hagiographical literature in terms of content and form. In particular, the homilist's use of primary hagiographic sources provides a rare insight into the stages of the homilies' composition and the marked presence of authorial choice. Equally noteworthy is the existence of a conceptual core, represented by the saints' figures, from which several thematic strands emerge. By unpacking these themes, we are able to gain access to the role of John's preaching in the spiritual edification of his congregations and to facets of the preacher's own personality.

In light of this, this thesis is conceived, first, as the first thorough investigation of John of Damascus' preaching activity and homiletic method, and second, as an attempt to demonstrate the profound interpretative potential of homiletic discourse in the direction just outlined, on the basis of the Damascene's three hagiographic homilies: the *Encomium of St Barbara* (CPG 8065), the *Encomium of St John Chrysostom* (CPG 8064), and the *Passion of St Artemius* (CPG 8082). The three texts will be accompanied by a new English translation sensitive to the patterns of diction and meaning across John's works.

This survey complements previous work on middle Byzantine homiletics focusing on homilists such as Germanos of Constantinople,<sup>15</sup> Andrew of Crete,<sup>16</sup> and Leo VI,<sup>17</sup> but proposes an approach that has not previously been pursued to any considerable extent with regard to a homilist's rhetorical production. A possible exception is T. Antonopoulou's monograph on the homilies of Emperor Leo VI whose insight into the inner structure of the homiletic texts I have adopted in my analysis. Her study represents an exceptional investigation of the literary sources underlying Leo's homilies, his rhetorical style, and some

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<sup>15</sup> List 1939.

<sup>16</sup> Cunningham 1983. Also, id. 1997.

<sup>17</sup> Antonopoulou 1997.

of the themes that underpin them. Her approach, nevertheless, is intended to be more descriptive than interpretive.

Instead, I argue that a close reading of John of Damascus' homilies is fundamental for bringing out the unexploited potential of these texts. The examination of a homilist's literary sources and his method of adapting the borrowed material to the demands of a new context is certainly part of this process. However, more aspects of the homilies emerge when their analysis takes the form of a scholarly 'exegesis', as it were – namely, of a systematic attempt to elucidate these texts by prioritising their close reading and examining them from a literary, thematic, intertextual, historical, or theological standpoint as necessary, in order to access their seemingly straightforward and stereotypical content and penetrate the meaning behind them. This is particularly important in the case of homilies such as John's, which are devoid of circumstantial details and information about the preacher and his audience, and therefore impede an effortless recovering of their context and meaning. In the last three decades, several topics including the liturgical and non-liturgical context of preaching, the social composition of audiences, and the style and rhetorical technique of preachers as a means of facilitating audience comprehension, have been the focus of promising research in the area of Byzantine homiletics with regard to the preaching activity between the fourth and tenth centuries.<sup>18</sup> The task is particularly rewarding in the case of early homilists, not only because their speech is dotted with references to the attendants and the circumstances of delivery, but also on account of the audience-orientated subject of their sermons, as in the case, for example, of the catechetical and socio-ethical homilies.<sup>19</sup> Homilies after the sixth century, however, are peculiar for betraying very little direct evidence about the preacher and his congregation. The close reading of John's hagiographic homilies aims at compensating for

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<sup>18</sup> MacMullen 1989; Cunningham 1990; Olivari 1991; Allen and Mayer 1993. See Cunningham and Allen 1998 for an investigation of these aspects with reference to individual preachers.

<sup>19</sup> Cunningham 2008b: 875-6.

the lack of this kind of information, proving their value as literary texts when a different approach is applied.

Elements of the methodological framework proposed here can also be discerned in a series of articles by J. Leemans, whose insightful reading of some fourth-century panegyrics on saints by Basil of Caesarea has produced valuable findings regarding the representational nature of homilies and what this reveals about the broader context in which they were delivered.<sup>20</sup> The present thesis largely builds on the following notion: ‘Panegyrics on martyrs were, like most homilies in Late Antiquity, pluri-focal discourses. By this I mean that they mostly had more than one topic and/or that, starting from their main topic, many subtopics were treated in depth or just briefly touched upon in passing.’<sup>21</sup> Focusing on the figures of the saints and commenting on selected passages, Leemans demonstrates that their portrayal in the homilies intended to serve different pastoral purposes and reinforce various facets of Christian identity.<sup>22</sup> My intention is likewise to detect the main ‘subtopics’ that emerge from John of Damascus’ depiction of saintly figures, by reading closely his hagiographic homilies and utilising whatever resources available to explain them. To the best of my knowledge, a content-oriented approach to homiletic literature with these characteristics has not previously been applied to an extensive study on homiletics.

### *John of Damascus and the hagiographic homilies*

In the eighth century, preaching on saints continued to be practiced with the same vigour that homilists had displayed nearly four hundred years before in their praise of the victims of

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<sup>20</sup> Leemans 2004 and 2005.

<sup>21</sup> Leemans 2005: 65.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, the presentation of the martyr Gordius as an example of steadfastness in the faith, as a monk, and as a victor of paganism: Leemans 2005: 65-79. Similarly, for St Julitta, see Leemans 2004: 269-79.

earlier persecutions under non-Christian emperors, and of persons whose memory was cherished and kept alive as a reminder of the virtuous life they led. It started to take shape in the sophisticated encomia of the Cappadocians and the more spontaneous panegyrics of John Chrysostom, and would form a major part of the activity of the prolific Severus of Antioch in the sixth century.<sup>23</sup> Andrew of Crete and John of Euboea are proof of the place that the saints still had both in the lives of the faithful and in the preaching ministry of the Church in the time of John Damascene.<sup>24</sup> The rich homiletic tradition on the saints' feast days meant that there was no rigid homogeneity of style and composition, whether because of authorial creativity and the succession of literary trends, or because of changes in the circumstances of preaching, as will be discussed in the following chapter.<sup>25</sup> The content of hagiographic homilies was also subject to significant variation, partly as a result of the need to recontextualise the accounts of the saints' lives in order for them to be meaningful for new audiences. It was a process that had a marked influence on the portrayal of saints in the homilies of John of Damascus, and on which our subsequent analysis will also be premised.

It is useful to bear in mind that John's strategies of recontextualisation, and the nature of his preaching in general, can more adequately be explained, if certain aspects of his life and work, and of the world he lived in are taken into account. The majority of what we know about John of Damascus is thanks to various attempts made by scholars to reconstruct his biographical details. John's own writings, in typical Damascenean fashion, are frustratingly devoid of factual content. Testimonies that can be securely dated relatively soon after his death are not very illuminating either. Such accounts as Theophanes' *Chronographia* provide

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<sup>23</sup> Efthymiadis 2015: 372-7; although presenting a brief examination of Greek hagiography, his discussion is useful for information on the tradition of hagiographic homilies, including those by John of Damascus (ibid. 378). See further on hagiographic encomia, Hinterberger 2014: 36-9, 43-9; Høgel 2002: 22-3.

<sup>24</sup> For the surviving corpus of fifth-eighth-century hagiographic homilies, see also chapter 2, p. 35.

<sup>25</sup> On the variation of rhetorical style and focus in homilies in general: Cunningham 1990; Antonopoulou 1997: 102-110. See also Cunningham 1997 for a comparison of style in the homilies of the eighth-century preachers Andrew of Crete and John of Euboea.

only isolated hints about him.<sup>26</sup> They remain useful, however, for corroborating the information we are given by the hagiographical tradition, which, by contrast, is profuse with details, yet requires one to be mindful of the well-known risk of distinguishing reality from fiction.<sup>27</sup> Over the last decades several scholars have attempted to incorporate the existing accounts into a unified narrative of John's life.<sup>28</sup> A full discussion of the biographical material about him and its interpretation will not be attempted again, but it may be important to reiterate those aspects of John's life that will prove relevant as we proceed.

Although he had been thoroughly educated in Greek culture, John lived outside Byzantine territory, in Syria and Palestine. By the time of his death in c.750, these former Roman provinces had been under Arab control for nearly a century. His family had a prominent place in the service of the Umayyad caliphate in Syria. His father and grandfather were in charge of the fiscal affairs at the capital of Damascus, where John also later became involved in the fiscal administration of the Umayyads, until he abandoned his civil post to pursue a monastic life in Palestine at some point in the early 700s.<sup>29</sup> The context of John's monastic tonsure is worth pausing on. Tradition has it that he became a monk of St Sabas monastery in the Judean desert.<sup>30</sup> The earliest secure reference in connection with St Sabas can be traced to the eleventh-century Arabic *vita* of John, and may even be dated back, although not without

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<sup>26</sup> Theophanes, *Chronographia* A.M. 6221, 408.25-7; A.M. 6234, 417.14-22.

<sup>27</sup> Among the oldest surviving accounts of John's biography are an eleventh-century Arabic *vita* and a Greek *vita* composed by a certain John, patriarch of Jerusalem. For subsequent translations of John's biography see Flusin 1989. For an introduction and translation in German of the Arabic life, see Graf 1913. The text of the Greek life can be found in PG 94.429-89. On the question of its authorship, see Kontouma 2015: II. See also fn. 31 below.

<sup>28</sup> Some of the earliest studies on the subject are Jugie 1924 and Nasrallah 1950, which established the thematic agenda for later scholarly treatments of John's life: family background; education and career in the Umayyad administration; retirement from public office and relationship with Palestinian monasticism; involvement in the iconoclast controversy; dates of birth and death. These accounts were revisited with new insight by Sahas 1972; Le Coz 1992; Auzépy 1994. The most recent treatments of John's biography are Louth 2002: 3-14; Kontouma 2015: I; Janosik 2016: 20-44; Griffith 2016.

<sup>29</sup> The date of this move is disputed. For a summary of the debate: Griffith 2016: 33-5.

<sup>30</sup> See e.g. Louth 2002: 6.

contention, to the ninth century.<sup>31</sup> However, some scholars have recently cast doubts on the validity of this assumption, given the absence of John's name from two works concerning the Sabaite community in the eighth century, and argue that after his ordination as a priest by the patriarch John V (705-735), the Damascene formed part of the patriarchal circle in Jerusalem, where he spent the rest of his life.<sup>32</sup> In an attempt to situate John more firmly in the context of Palestinian monasticism, Louth draws attention to the title of a tenth-century manuscript containing John's *First Homily on the Dormition* which connects him with the Old Laura, namely the monastery of St Chariton, as opposed to the Great Laura of St Sabas.<sup>33</sup> There is little doubt that John had close ties with Jerusalem, as his intimate relationship with the patriarch John V testifies, as well as the fact that he might have served as a presbyter of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.<sup>34</sup> Yet his special relationship with the Judean desert should not be overlooked, whichever his monastic community was and for however short a period, if we indeed accept that he remained in Jerusalem permanently after his ordination. Palestinian monasticism had a profound impact on many aspects of his multifarious personality, and monastic practice and desert spirituality are often reflected in his hagiographic homilies,

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<sup>31</sup> The Greek *vita* of the Damascene, which was composed by John, patriarch of Jerusalem, and was based on an Arabic original according to its author, also reproduces the information about the monastery of St Sabas. If the eleventh-century Arabic *vita* was the source for the Greek, the latter must have been written by John VIII (1106-56). There is, however, evidence, albeit inconclusive, that an even earlier Arabic original might be the source for the Greek *vita*, suggesting Patriarch John VII (964-66/69) as its author, or even John VI (838-42), thus pushing back the tradition about John and St Sabas monastery as early as the ninth century; see Janosik 2016: 38.

<sup>32</sup> Auzépy 1994: 184-5. Also Griffith 2016: 33.

<sup>33</sup> Louth 1998: 249.

<sup>34</sup> See Louth 2002: 6. Cf. also chapter 1, p. 38. The detail about the Church of the Holy Sepulchre appears in the title of the *Homily on the fig-tree: Ficus, titul.*: 'presbyter of the Holy Resurrection of Christ our God' (Kotter 1988: 102). It should be noted, however, that it has been transmitted only in a single manuscript (ibid. 96-7), and thus should be taken with some caution. Due to the long history of transmission, there is not a fruitful way of determining whether the inscriptions to John's works are authorial or the product of the manuscript tradition. Even so, the epithet 'presbyter' is well-attested in the manuscripts and leaves no doubt that John had been ordained a priest (see the headings to the homilies and the accompanying commentaries in Kotter's edition). Theophanes the Chronicler also introduces John of Damascus in connection with the iconoclastic controversy as 'πρεσβύτερος καὶ μοναχός'; Theophanes, *Chronographia* A.M. 6221, 408.26.



being essential to understanding his teaching and self-perception.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, we will see that the fact that John lived both in the monastery and Jerusalem poses a challenge to the contextualisation of his homilies which cannot lightly be ignored based on the conviction that he only preached in the city, and only through minor details can we conjecture the routes of his preaching activity.

In Palestine John probably produced most of his theological work.<sup>36</sup> His dogmatic and polemical treatises closely reflect the religious situation in the Near East in the first half of the eighth century. The Chalcedonian Christian community to which John belonged faced the challenges of a multi-confessional landscape overarched by the presence of Islam.<sup>37</sup> As Griffith notes, 'It is striking how readily the topical profile of John of Damascus' works corresponds both sociologically and theologically with the church-defining concerns of the Christian communities in Syria/Palestine during the time of his sojourn in Jerusalem. In particular, the refutation of Messalians, Monotheletes, Jacobites, Nestorians, Manichees, all active in his immediate milieu, pressingly concerned him.'<sup>38</sup> It is against this background that John's homilies should also be read. John did not target any particular heterodox group of his time in his preaching. Nonetheless, as will become apparent in chapter 4, his homilies were also intended to serve an anti-heretical function, the need for which was made all the more urgent in light of the threat posed to synodical orthodoxy by the iconoclast controversy. Opposition to Muslim beliefs and practices was presumably also latent in his affirmation of Chalcedonian orthodoxy in the homilies. However, the theological thrust of his preaching is

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<sup>35</sup> See chapters 3 and 5. Assessing John's activity and reputation, Louth emphasises that '[i]t is important not to isolate John the monk from the background of the Palestinian monasticism to which he belonged.'; Louth 2002: 13.

<sup>36</sup> For the possibility that some of his writings belong to his pre-monastic days, see Louth 2002: 8 and Adrahtas 2015: 264-5.

<sup>37</sup> For John of Damascus' cultural milieu, see Louth 2000 and Griffith 2011. Among various studies, see further, Griffith 2001a; id. 2006; Haldon 1992, for the periods preceding and following John. On Christian views of the Muslim Arabs and the development of Christianity in the world of Islam, see the prominent studies by Hoyland 1997 and Griffith 2008.

<sup>38</sup> Griffith 2016: 35.

more readily associated with his polemical engagement with the ‘traditional’ Christological heresies and the iconoclast threat arriving from outside the Muslim Caliphate.<sup>39</sup>

Apart from being reliable a indicator of his pervasive preoccupation with the religious integrity of local communities, John’s theological work also exemplifies his methods of exposition and composition. In particular, his treatises against the iconoclasts, composed as a response to imperial reaction against icons under Leo III (717-741), display remarkable argumentative maturity and an admirable handling of patristic literature. For our purposes, the florilegia of patristic quotations that accompany them are of particular interest, being the most vivid example of John’s effective use of primary sources and their integration into his discussion as an auxiliary methodological tool. It is a practice that is also employed elsewhere in his treatises, but is also echoed in his hagiographic homilies. Florilegia as such, useful as they might have been in the framework of carefully formulated treatises, had no place in homiletic discourse. They do, however, reveal John’s resourcefulness, manifested in his use of a wide range of literary sources, which, in the case of his hagiographic encomia, was translated into the incorporation of older hagiographic texts and wholesale passages from other types of literature into his homilies.<sup>40</sup>

The homilies in question are, as already mentioned, the *Encomium of St Barbara*, the *Encomium of St John Chrysostom*, and the *Passion of St Artemius*. The *Encomium of St Barbara* is a laudatory sermon preached to honour the feast-day of the fourth-century virgin martyr Barbara. The homily is composed in sophisticated language and ornate style,

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<sup>39</sup> Griffith correctly insists that ‘one might well consider his whole intellectual project, especially with the *Pegē Gnoseōs*, but not excluding even his three orations in defense of the icons [...] as a reasoned response to the intellectual and religious challenge of a burgeoning Islam. The corollary of this position is that it is a methodological mistake to consider only John’s explicitly anti-Islamic writing as exhausting his response to the call to Islam.’; Griffith 2016: 40. Nevertheless, even though one should bear in mind the broader context of early Islam, any approach to the theological overtones of John’s homilies necessarily passes through an analysis of his extant treatises in search of parallels and common themes. Given that none of them deals explicitly with Islam except for the last chapter of his *On Heresies*, the identification of an agenda against Muslims in his hagiographic homilies remains elusive.

<sup>40</sup> For this distinctive feature of John’s preaching, see chapter 2.

abounding with rhetorical flourishes and devices. It follows closely the events of Barbara's martyrdom, even though the narrative is not continuous; the preacher interpolates commentaries and participates personally by addressing the persons involved. Of the three sermons, the *Encomium of St Barbara* is the most rhetorically elaborate and that with the greater degree of cohesion and conciseness.

The *Encomium of St John Chrysostom* is another piece of exceptional laudatory artistry, distinguished for the controlled, yet intense, rhythm of its syntax and the dense characterisations of the saint. Contrary to that of Barbara, the homily of St John Chrysostom is unconventional in terms of structure and content. The Damascene's narration of the saint's life is very brief and episodic, and by no means corresponds to the eventful life of the saint. The preacher is rather interested in highlighting certain aspects of John Chrysostom's personality, and it is this intention that often creates a sense of constructive repetition within the limited length of the homily as a strategy of reinforcing the impact of the saint's traits.

At the opposite extreme is the *Passion of St Artemius*. It is an unusually long homily whose main characteristic is the fullness of the narrative about Artemius' life and ordeal, aided by the extensive incorporation of literary material from other sources. We are presented with a homily that is based on a different set of priorities from those that mark the other two encomia which consist in the emphasis on historiographical content, the long tracts of dialogue between Artemius and his fellow-martyrs, and their persecutor, the emperor Julian, and the several digressions.

Two hypotheses could account for the length of the homily. According to Louth, an explanation could be advanced along the lines that, 'although originally delivered as a homily, what we have now is more of a hagiographical treatise on St Artemios, composed by someone with a scholarly bent, who has used the opportunity to give an account of the saint's

‘times’ from a wide range of sources.’<sup>41</sup> Efthymiadis, on the other hand, suggests that the text was meant to be read out during the celebration of the saint’s feast-day.<sup>42</sup> It is in fact a view already advocated by Louth, albeit cautiously:

One of the strangest features of John’s homilies is the way in which he incorporates sometimes quite substantial extracts from other literary sources (including other writings of his own). From this it would appear that John wrote his homilies down beforehand, and read them out (whether this was an odd practice, we have not the evidence to judge, but one would have thought it unusual; it is certainly contrary to traditional rhetorical practice).<sup>43</sup>

Despite reservations, the reading of at least some of the homilies is a possibility which some clues may help to clarify.<sup>44</sup> Internal evidence suggests that, at any rate, there was a degree of preparation before John delivered his hagiographic homilies. As already mentioned, in the case of the *Passion of St Artemius*, this involved the incorporation of wholesale passages from other sources. The narrative of Barbara’s martyrdom in the *Encomium of St Barbara* closely paraphrases an earlier account of the saint’s ordeal, while a passage recounting John Chrysostom’s monastic years in the *Encomium of St Chrysostom* is modelled on an account written by Palladius.<sup>45</sup> On the basis of this, it can be assumed with some certainty that John of Damascus was in control of the overall structure and content of his homilies before their delivery, increasing the likelihood that the length of the *Passion of St Artemius* does not necessarily imply the existence of an original ‘homily-like’ form and a later redaction. The practice of a homilist copying his own sermons is mentioned in relation to the emperor Leo VI.<sup>46</sup> On one occasion, we are informed that one of his homilies was delivered by an imperial secretary, which implies that it had been written in advance.<sup>47</sup> Even

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<sup>41</sup> Louth 2002: 228.

<sup>42</sup> Efthymiadis 2015: 378 (also with reference to the *Encomium of St Barbara*).

<sup>43</sup> Louth 2002: 227.

<sup>44</sup> For the practice of reading of homilies in later centuries, as evidenced by the surviving liturgical collections and *typika*, see Cunningham 2011b.

<sup>45</sup> For more on this topic, see chapter 2.

<sup>46</sup> Antonopoulou 1997: 101-2.

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.* 36.

so, Antonopoulou notes that ‘the emperor could have used notes, and that the final text was the product of a later reworking.’<sup>48</sup>

One might indeed suggest that after John preached his homilies, perhaps from notes, he later expanded them with literary material from other sources, initiating his own editing process. This could well be the case, especially as regards the *Passion of St Artemius* and the *Encomium of St Barbara*. One would have to explain, however, why the editing/enrichment of the *Encomium of St John Chrysostom* is limited to the borrowing and adaptation of only a small extract from Palladius. If John had started to edit and expand his homily based on Palladius’ account, we should expect him to have continued along the same line with the rest of the narrative of Chrysostom’s life. The fact that he did not indicates that the reliance of the homilies on primary sources should not necessarily be associated to their being edited after delivery. We cannot deny altogether the possibility of a subsequent intervention to the homilies by John. Yet there are good reasons to suspect that his homilies were prepared beforehand, and even written down and addressed to the audience, as has also been suggested by Efthymiadis and Louth.

Such methodological concerns, and particularly the question of how far the texts that we possess reflect the preacher’s words at the moment of the delivery of the homilies, should be taken into account before we proceed to our analysis. They form part of a lively debate that has received the attention of many scholars over the years,<sup>49</sup> and also include further considerations, such as the role of stenographers in the transmission of homilies. In relation to John, we cannot be sure whether there were any individuals from his circle present in the audience with the role of recording his speeches. The practice is certainly attested in this period, especially in a Constantinopolitan context, but we simply have no information

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<sup>48</sup> *ibid.* 43.

<sup>49</sup> For an overview of the methodological problems associated with the status of the transmitted homilies, see Mayer 2008: 575-9. A recent detailed discussion with reference to the homiletic work of John Chrysostom can be found in Cook 2016: 31-65.

regarding John.<sup>50</sup> There is also no evidence that John's homilies were preached *impromptu*. In fact, the nature of the encomia indicates otherwise. In the prologue to the *Encomium of St John Chrysostom*, the Damascene obeys the exhortation of a man who is present in the audience to preach.<sup>51</sup> However, this by itself does not necessarily represent an example of spontaneous preaching, especially given the likely possibility that as a priest John was expected to preach on a permanent basis.

Whether John carefully prepared his homilies in advance or modified them after their delivery, we also deal with the challenge that in their present form they were perhaps cut off from the context and audience to which they were addressed as a result of the editing process. Such a possibility has been considered as a strong enough reason to question the contribution of this kind of homilies to such fields as social history, on the grounds that the recipient audience and the preaching context remain unknown to us.<sup>52</sup> Although we should be aware of this problem, it would be unwise to let it prevent us from attempting a study of the context of John's homilies or of the aims of his preaching. This stance could be permitted in the case of preachers with a large homiletic production, such as John Chrysostom, but its adoption in the study of John Damascene's corpus would mean to reject the opportunity of a fruitful examination of his very few surviving homilies. Besides, even if the texts do not reflect the precise circumstances of delivery or the exact nature of the audiences that listened to them, we should not undervalue the fact that John was obviously writing his sermons having in mind the expectations of his congregations and their needs, of which he was well aware. There was always an 'intended audience' to his homilies; his message would have no effect, unless it were relevant to the lives of those that were going to hear it. The slight evidence that the texts provide reveals something about those intended audiences (which, in fact, may well

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<sup>50</sup> Antonopoulou 1997: 101.

<sup>51</sup> *Chrys.* 1.11-3. See further chapter 1, p. 40.

<sup>52</sup> See e.g. Cook 2016: 50-2.

have been identical with the ‘actual’ audiences). The hagiographic homilies point to mixed congregations of laity and monks. Although the preacher usually addresses the faithful in generic terms as ‘Christ-loving and martyr-loving congregation’, ‘brothers’, and ‘beloved’,<sup>53</sup> his reference to the collective celebrations that are taking place on St Barbara’s feast day<sup>54</sup> is suggestive of diverse participation in the festivities. So is his request for attention and the criticism against distracting secular spectacles which would only make sense if the homily were addressed to a lay audience.<sup>55</sup> The same is suggested by his address to the congregation in the *Passion of St Artemius*, which makes a clear distinction between laymen and clergy.<sup>56</sup> It is against the backdrop of this kind of audiences that John’s works will be examined, as well as on the assumption that the content of the homilies and the circumstances of delivery correspond in all likelihood to their concerns and the possible contexts in which they gathered to celebrate the saints’ feast days.

### *Overview of the thesis*

Each chapter of the thesis should be thought of as a step from the outermost to the innermost layers of the homily. The imaginary line that cuts downward through these layers and along which this study proceeds is represented by the accounts of the saints’ lives and deaths and the discourse that envelops them. Chapter 1 begins by looking into the circumstances in which these stories were told before an audience, the external factors that determined the ‘where’ and ‘when’ of the homiletic act (first layer). It seeks to shed light on the obscurity

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<sup>53</sup> *Barb.* 2.1-2: ὁ φιλόχριστον καὶ φιλόμαρτυς σύστημα; 15.11: ἀδελφοί; 16.9: ἀγαπητοί. Also, *Artem.* 3.8-9: ὡς φιλοχρίστοις τε οὖσι καὶ φιλομάρτυσιν.

<sup>54</sup> See above.

<sup>55</sup> *Barb.* 2.3-10. See also the relevant comment in chapter two.

<sup>56</sup> *Artem.* 3.1-2: Ο holy assembly and divinely gathered congregation of Christ, sacred nation and royal priesthood (ὁ ἱερὰ πανήγυρις καὶ Χριστοῦ λαὸς θεοσύλλεκτος, ἔθνος ἅγιον καὶ βασιλεῖον ἱεράτευμα).

that surrounds the location and occasion of John of Damascus' hagiographic homilies and explain the general absence of internal information on these aspects of his preaching which, although a fairly common occurrence in Byzantine homilies,<sup>57</sup> contrasts notably with several early encomia on saints in which descriptions of the setting and circumstances of delivery were an integral and prominent part of the preacher's speech. The first part of the chapter deals with the issue of location, associating the frequency of internal references to a homily's setting and their paucity in John's homilies with changes over time in the nature of the organised ritual of the *panegyris*, and pursues the few hints that John has left us to suggest possible locations for the delivery of his hagiographic homilies. A similar framework for speculating about the liturgical occasion of his panegyrics is employed in the second part of the chapter.

Chapter 2 probes deeper into the homilies as rhetorical accounts of the saints' lives by discussing the very process of their composition, in other words how the homilist's hagiographic sermons came into being (second layer). Attention is drawn to the wide range of primary sources which served as a basis for John's homilies and comprise older hagiographic texts, historiographical sources, and selections of extracts on pagan wisdom. They are crucial for understanding his method of preaching, since they stand at the core of the homilies, combined with elaborate prologues and epilogues, rhetorical devices, and personal remarks by the preacher. John's treatment of these sources indicates that, although he presented retellings of the saints' lives, he valued and exploited in his speech the written tradition surrounding them. The implications are profound and, first of all, concern the way and extent to which John reused material from other works. The process of borrowing and adapting varied considerably from homily to homily, as will be discussed in relation to each homily in the first three sections of the chapter, producing different effects. The literary character and

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<sup>57</sup> Cf. Cunningham and Allen 1998: 6: 'Very often the circumstances or even the general location of a homily remain unknowable'.



content of the homilies were further influenced by the conventions that went hand in hand with the borrowed material, and particularly the hagiographical commonplaces or *topoi*. Despite objections and doubts as to the value of the interpretation placed upon literary *topoi*, I will argue, following a number of scholars, for the necessity of understanding their function in the texts (fourth section of chapter 2). A final section emphasises John's place in the tradition of reworking older hagiographic texts, known as *metaphrasis*.

After considering first the context that gave rise to John of Damascus' homilies as acts of narrating the lives of holy people, and then the various literary units upon which his speech was constructed – the building blocks of his sermons –, I will turn to a more detailed investigation into their content and argument. The goal is to assess the aims of John's preaching, and so chapters 3 and 4 go deeper, to the reasons why his hagiographic homilies are given their specific traits (third layer of a homily). The focus moves to the preacher's didactic intent, tracing the process by which astonishingly durable stories were infused with meaning for new audiences. By retaining John's recounting of the saints' lives as the principal axis of the discussion, the two chapters unveil the thematic essence of his homilies through an examination of their content. The third chapter provides an insight into how the homilist communicates virtues to his audience by presenting the saints as examples worthy of imitation. It entails the study of the homilies as exhortations to individual spiritual achievement and the attainment of the Christian ideal, particularly by expanding on the themes of family and monasticism. The first half of the chapter makes a case for the *Encomium of St Barbara* as a warning example of the consequences that the alienation from God can have on family life, and an illustration in the figure of St Barbara of one's strong yearning for perfection even under adverse conditions, rewarded with one's presence in the family of heaven. The rest of the chapter explores how the *Encomium of St John Chrysostom* is moulded to incite the audience to spiritual elevation by means of the values of

monasticism. By contextualising the homily in the light of the monastic literature from around John Damascene's time and the role of monks within society, it is possible to make a better assessment of John's intentions for his audience.

Further insights about the preacher's ability to make hagiographic stories meaningful for his congregations are gleaned from the generation of archetypal figures and behaviours with an eye to contemporary relevance. The fourth chapter turns from the individual to the communal dimension of the panegyrics and their quality as instruments of community cohesion by examining John's treatment of figures of political authority in the hagiographic narratives and their hostile attitude towards Christians and the Church. The manipulation of the characters of the saints' persecutors in the homilies, and notably in the *Passion of St Artemius*, produces easily identifiable forms of threat to the faith which keep the faithful alert to the oppressive use of political power for the propagation of false beliefs and erroneous doctrines. Evidence adduced from John's treatises on iconoclasm suggests that he rendered these negative exemplars of tyrannical power particularly resonant for contemporary audiences.

Finally, chapter 5 shifts attention from John's use of the hagiographic accounts for the purpose of instruction to what can be described as the last and deepest layer of the homilies, namely their capacity to project pieces of the preacher's self. A number of studies have treated the issue of authorial self-representation in different forms of Christian literature, and the modes by which authors fashion images of themselves in their writings. These studies are generally predicated on the assumption that texts are more likely to provide us with an insight into 'how a writer wished to be viewed than about what he really thought.'<sup>58</sup> Although in principle I acknowledge the validity of this assumption, I am not interested in it here as a methodological starting point because of its strong emphasis on the literary construction of

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<sup>58</sup> Krueger 2004: 9.

authorial identity which leaves little room for the author's interior disposition. Rather than presenting modes of self-representation, chapter 5 therefore offers 'instances' of the preacher's self; in other words, a combination of textual clues from John's hagiographic homilies and other works that can reveal to us something about the person of John of Damascus. These include a small number of first-person utterances and the theme of the saints' exemplarity, which initiates a process of comparison between John and the saints. The homilist's self is also brought to the fore through the characteristics of the saints' depiction. The last section of the chapter demonstrates that the struggles, attitude, and spiritual gifts of the saints echo John's own anxieties and aspirations as a monk, theologian, and preacher. The first part of the thesis concludes with a summary of the principal arguments, and briefly spells out the implications for the study of Byzantine homilies.

The second part of the thesis contains the translations of John of Damascus' hagiographic homilies. The text of the *Encomium of St Barbara*, the *Encomium of St John Chrysostom*, and the *Passion of St Artemius* is taken from Kotter 1988: 256-78, 359-70, and 202-45 respectively. To date there has been no English translation of either the *Encomium of St Barbara* or the *Encomium of St John Chrysostom*. A full English translation of the *Passion of St Artemius* is also lacking. A great part of it has been translated by M. Vermes as part of a volume on Late Antique and Byzantine sources on the reign of Constantine I and his immediate successors.<sup>59</sup> However, the passages concerning Artemius' fellow-martyrs Macarius and Eugenius (25.5-34) and the relics of St Babylas (54-55.12), which amount to about one seventh of the total number of the text's sections, were not included in the translation. P. Amidon has also translated parts of the homily but only insofar as they belong to Joseph Bidez's edition of the *Ecclesiastical History* of Philostorgius, a lost work reconstructed on the basis of a summary preserved by Photius and of several extracts from

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<sup>59</sup> In Lieu and Montserrat 1996: 224-56.

the *Passion of St Artemius*.<sup>60</sup> As Amidon states, his intention is to translate Bidez's text, and therefore apart from using Bidez's much older edition of the passages from the *Passion of St Artemius*, his translation is also incomplete. With regard to the translated parts found in Vermes and Amidon and the translation presented in this thesis, one will reasonably find points of convergence and divergence that depend on personal style and judgment. Nevertheless, I take particular care to correct inaccuracies,<sup>61</sup> respecting, however, the fact that these earlier translations were produced with a different focus and purpose in mind.

The translations are overall literal, and I have tried to be mindful of the danger of being either too rigid or too loose. For common names of people and places I use standard anglicised forms (John, Constantine, Julian, Antioch). In all other cases, Latinised versions will be adopted (Artemius, Marcianus, Philostorgius). In the case of names whose Greek form is notably different from the commonly accepted Latin(ised) version, the former will be transliterated in parentheses (Hannibalianus (Anaballianos), Herculus (Herkoullios)). Official titles will be written in their Latin equivalent (*dux* for δοῦξ, *nobilissimus* for νοβελλήσιμος).

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<sup>60</sup> Bidez 1981 (originally published in 1913). A list of the passages used from the *Passion of St Artemius* and their distribution within Bidez's final edited text, see the relevant table in Bidez 1981: 245. For Philostorgius as a source for the *Passion of St Artemius*, see the discussion of John's sources in ch. 2.

<sup>61</sup> See, for example, Woods' observations in relation to Vermes' translation; Woods 1999: 2 fn.1.

## 1 | Hagiographic preaching in context: location and occasion

A study of the hagiographic homilies of John of Damascus must begin by reviewing how certain parameters of rhetorical practice underwent substantial transformation over time and to what degree they affected the late Christian encomium. It is not my purpose to give an outline of the origins and development of the Christian oratory of praise.<sup>1</sup> Rather, it is to emphasise continuities and divergences in the encomia of John of Damascus and those of his earlier counterparts that can enhance our appreciation of his homilies. The reason for this choice is my interest in the homily as an act of communication that exists in a state of dialogue with the rhetorical reality of the present as well as with the rhetorical echoes of the past. Closer inspection of the homilies reveals that what, from a broader perspective, might be seen as a stylistic evolution in the patterns of Christian public speaking across different periods was in fact a process largely driven by contextual factors. We cannot, therefore, claim to provide an adequate analysis of John's hagiographic homilies, unless we place them in their rhetorical and oratorical setting, which in turn was influenced by social variables different from those of the preceding centuries. To this end, this chapter is devoted to the two principal elements comprising the external framework of hagiographic preaching: location and occasion. The information found in the homilies regarding these factors will provide us with an insight into the contextual dynamic of John of Damascus' panegyrics on saints and will establish a comparative framework against which earlier homiletic production can be

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<sup>1</sup> No comprehensive study of the evolution of Christian panegyric oratory exists except what one can find in discussions of aspects, sociopolitical and literary, of Christian rhetorical discourse such as Cameron 1991: 120-54 and Rapp 1998. Somewhat nearer a history of the panegyric, despite his interest in the broad study of Christian oratorical forms, is Kennedy 1983, 1994, and 1999, though now in need of revision and further development. For the funeral oration, a closely related oratorical form, see Norris 2000; Konstan 2000; Hägg 2006.

analysed. Crucially, it will allow us to draw conclusions on the impact that both location and occasion had on the content of homilies, or in other words, how far the preacher's discourse dwelled on these aspects.

### *Location*

The effect of homiletic discourse depended primarily on it being a form of public rhetoric. Public rhetoric acquired new vigour and influence in the evangelising and identity-building message of the early Christian preachers.<sup>2</sup> Thanks to their efforts, Christian teaching did not circulate among a close knit circle of insiders, but assumed a transcendental tone through the public presentation of the new religion's beliefs, whose echo could potentially be heard by every member of the society. Yet we are soon confronted with a paradox, one that is rooted in the homilies themselves. Homilies were public addresses made to a religious congregation by a preacher in a certain place and on a certain occasion. The combination of these factors means that ultimately 'each act of preaching is completely unique',<sup>3</sup> but even though preaching cannot be understood independently from them, it often happens that sermons are not quite a repository of information about these constituent elements of the preaching act. More often than not, homilies do not disclose any details about the homilist's biography or the identity of the audience, and reveal little if anything about the location where preacher and congregants were gathered and the liturgical acts that were performed before and after the sermon.

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<sup>2</sup> On how the historical potency of verbal expression in contemporary systems of political and social relations was for the Christians of the early Roman imperial period one of the principal instruments for the definition and propagation of the new faith, see Cameron 1991.

<sup>3</sup> Sandwell 2012: 3.

In his seminal book on the origins of the Christian homily, A. Stewart-Sykes sets out to establish formal criteria by which one can distinguish Christian literary texts from the first and second centuries as homilies.<sup>4</sup> Notwithstanding the complexity of his approach and potential objections to it, what becomes clear from his study is that the debate over early Christian oratorical discourse is inseparable from an examination of the sociocultural context of the ancient Christian communities.<sup>5</sup> One of the greatest merits of his book is that it presents preaching as a component of Christian household gatherings, and thus situates it firmly in a domestic setting, quite distinct in its character and influence from that of later churches.<sup>6</sup> Yet the context which Stewart-Sykes and others have sought to reconstruct can usually only be recovered through references that are external to the texts surviving from this period, and important circumstantial details, such as the location where the homilies were preached, are deduced indirectly from other sources. Early Christian literature, for example, provides substantial evidence for the use of private houses as centres of Christian worship where members of the congregation would also have the opportunity to preach. In the Pauline letters, the communication of the word of God is one of the main activities in the household

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<sup>4</sup> Stewart-Sykes 2001: 3: 'there is nothing extant from the first two centuries which is self-confessedly a homily preached in the synaxis.'

<sup>5</sup> Although the application of formal criteria inevitably generates classifications that do not fully encompass the complex origins and orientations of early Christian discourse, nevertheless, it is valuable for understanding the development of preaching in a period in which homilies had not yet acquired a clearly defined form. Before Stewart-Sykes other scholars too applied formal criteria to Christian preaching and teaching among which noteworthy is McDonald 1980, who detects four interrelated elements present in early Christian discourse (prophecy, *paraclesis*, *paraenesis*, and *paradosis*). For an objection to form-criticism, based on the fact that the settings of preaching in the literary sources are secondary constructs than the actual settings, see Penner and Vander 2009: 248. The latter opt for an examination of the rhetorical features that Christians borrowed from the Jewish and Greco-Roman rhetorical traditions to create their own form of discourse, rather than provide a definition of homilies based on such features.

<sup>6</sup> In the search for a tangible homiletic form in early Christian literature, Stewart-Sykes also dwells on a variety of focal points, such as the developments in the perspective and content of Christian discourse in relation to the changing character of the congregations, and the importance of the Jewish and Hellenistic discourse culture as models for the systematisation of speaking in the Christian assembly. Valeriy Alikin presents preaching as one of the activities of the Christian assembly along with the communal meal, the reading of the Scriptures, singing, and other ritual acts. These and other issues, such as the reading of sermons and the status of early preachers, are dealt with in his book on the early history of Christian assemblies which offers a concise survey of some of the current debates surrounding early preaching: Alikin 2010: 183-210.

gatherings of early Christians.<sup>7</sup> However, the testimonies to such religious gatherings as occasions in which, apart from the celebration of the eucharistic meal, provision was also made for the delivery of some sort of speech, do not originate in homilies. The few surviving texts that have a distinct homiletic form, such as Melito of Sardis' *Peri Pascha*, do not provide any clues as to the place of delivery.<sup>8</sup> Even the homilies of proliferate writers like Origen in the third century are silent about the physical location of the assemblies.<sup>9</sup>

The growing public presence of churches in the urban and rural landscape which culminated in the monumental religious architecture of the Constantinian period added a whole new dimension to preaching. The physical transformation of the centres of worship had an immediate influence on the act of preaching, and, first of all, on the way in which the preacher engaged with his audience. The place where the preacher stood, the distribution of the audience, questions of visibility and audibility, are all aspects of preaching that are closely related to the conditions created by the new church architecture.<sup>10</sup> Very importantly, the location would also often be relevant to the content of homilies and the role that physical places played in preaching emerges lucidly in a great number of encomia from the fourth century. The encomiastic sermons delivered in the public memorial feasts associated with saints contain numerous references to and descriptions of the topography of those ritual celebrations, or *panygereis*. Topography here should not be understood as encompassing only the particular place at which a preacher addressed his congregation. Although the homilist's surroundings impacted directly on his delivery style and the content of his sermons, on many occasions preaching formed part of a wider liturgical setting that, far from being stationary,

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<sup>7</sup> References can also be found in many early authors such as Justin, Irenaeus, Ignatius. Important are also writings that are concretely related to specific Christian groups and might even have had a function as homilies and texts that probably originate from homilies but are not preserved as such in their current form, such as Hermas' *Shepherd*. For all this, see Stewart-Sykes 2001.

<sup>8</sup> On Melito's work: *ibid.* 221-8.

<sup>9</sup> For Origen as a preacher, see Lienhard 1989; Castagno 1998; Heine 2010.

<sup>10</sup> For the emergence of these aspects of rhetorical performance in homilies from the fourth century, see Mayer 1997 on John Chrysostom.



emphasised movement, in this case through the processions to local saints' tombs and shrines known as *martyria*.<sup>11</sup> In Béatrice Caseau's words 'Christian geography was movable.'<sup>12</sup>

Working in a complementary fashion to the unfolding liturgical events, homilies engaged with the successive changes in the physical space that were characteristic of the ritual of the *panegyris*. Basil of Caesarea, in his *Homily on Gordius*, likens the multitude of faithful to bees pouring forth from a beehive, as they crowd the ornament that lies outside the walls of the city which is none other than the martyrium dedicated to St Gordius at the place of his execution.<sup>13</sup> That the homily opens with the procession to the martyr's shrine is not accidental. The faithful prove their spiritual eagerness to near the 'heavenly flowers', the martyrs buried at the martyrium, and respond to the prompting of that who is the leader of all, Gordius himself.<sup>14</sup> So does Basil too, who, despite his poor health, comes to the site that is the centre of the day's celebrations.<sup>15</sup> There, at the other end of the road from Caesarea, Basil is incited to preach, dwelling on the saint's works as if humming around a flower. The acceptance of the martyr's inviting call and the arrival of the faithful at his shrine like bees that fly to a flower is what stirs Basil to halt at the thought of the martyr's deeds and preach. The very movement to Gordius' martyrium is not simply part of the ritualised context of the *panegyris*; it is in fact the first step in setting the stage for the delivery of the homily by the preacher. Gregory of Nyssa likewise refers in one of his homilies to the holy place where priests and people have assembled at the trumpet call of St Theodore the Recruit. Gregory wonders at the number of faithful swarming from both city and country defying the winter weather in order to visit the site where the martyr is buried.<sup>16</sup> The devotional and ritual power of the saint's relics is such that the significance attributed to them stretches beyond the

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<sup>11</sup> So far the best overview of the Christian *panegyris* can be found in Limberis 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Caseau 1999: 43.

<sup>13</sup> Basil of Caesarea, *In Gordium* (CPG 2862; BHG 703) PG 31.489C. Cf. Leemans 2005: 48.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.* PG 31.489.25.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.* PG 31.489.32-4.

<sup>16</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *De s. Theodoro* (CPG 3182; BHG 1760) PG 46.736.30-9.

boundaries of the burial ground, attracting people from the close vicinity and others who must travel a considerable distance before arriving there. Through his admiration, Gregory wishes to praise the enthusiasm of the faithful to gather at the martyr's tomb. Without their presence neither the *panegyris* nor the preacher's message would be meaningful. The routes to and from the religious sites of urban and rural areas are therefore often integrated into the topography of the homilies, bearing equal weight to the places of preaching.

As the epicentre of the preaching event, the martyrs' burial sites and shrines in turn also infiltrate into the rhetorical fabric of the speeches, being transformed into emotive devices of religious and aesthetic experience. The level of detail in allusions to the immediate location of preaching, or to objects with particular spatial prominence (such as the sarcophagus of a saint), varies considerably and reaches its pinnacle in Gregory of Nyssa's well-known *ekphrasis* of the shrine that housed the body of St Theodore the Recruit in Euchaita.<sup>17</sup> As the martyr's burial place receives the descriptive attention of the preacher, Gregory digresses into a verbal representation of the visual beauty of the martyrium. Imposing in size, the shrine manifests the vivid artistry of the craftsmen that worked to build it: the carpenter adorned it with animal figures, the stonemason polished its stone surfaces, and the painter depicted the glorious deeds, the painful tortures of the martyr, and Christ in his human form. Even the floor was designed to match the saint's story. Gregory renders alive verbally what his audience can already perceive visually, emphasising how the church harmonises with Theodore's 'living and flourishing' body and forging a relationship of intimacy between them and the martyr. His *ekphrasis* is one more example of how central space is to the preaching activity in the fourth century.

Sometimes the literary space of the homilies does not necessarily correspond to the physical places that hold a special significance in the context of the ongoing *panegyris*. It

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<sup>17</sup> *ibid.* PG 46.737.40-740.10. For a discussion of the *ekphrasis*, see Limberis 2011: 53-62.

may also be relevant as a dimension that weaves together distant geographical places through which the preacher projects an image of a diverse, yet unified, sacred place. Asterius of Amasea delivered his *Homily on Phocas* at a shrine devoted to the saint.<sup>18</sup> Asterius mentions there how the spread of the martyr's relics, coming out of the 'metropolis' (the city of Sinope), has created for him 'colonies' where he is honoured.<sup>19</sup> Phocas is, for example, revered in Rome where his head can be found, and fragments of his relics are also kept in Amasea, in the very church where Asterius is preaching. Whereas until now, as we have seen, the site of a saint's burial or the shrine that contains his body is the focus of homiletic activity, preachers amplified their audience's perception of space, and, in particular, of Christian space, when the diffusion of a saint's relics had as a consequence the creation of multiple locations for his cult. Homilies delivered on the occasion of the translation of a saint's relics are a further testimony to the skill of homilists in manipulating the dimensions of space in their oral addresses, playing with the binary local and distant. It is a happy coincidence that there survives a homily delivered by John Chrysostom precisely on the occasion of the reception of Phocas' relics in Constantinople.<sup>20</sup>

Although the physical and material environment of delivery is reflected in many fourth-century encomia, this is certainly not the rule. St Romanus the martyr, a victim of the great persecution under Diocletian, had an established cult in Antioch, and by the time of Severus (465-538) there was already a church built in his honour.<sup>21</sup> Yet in his homily on Romanus' feast day John Chrysostom nowhere mentions the location of the congregation's gathering nor does he hint at the presence of the martyr's holy relics which might have given us a partial clue about the main site of the *panegyris*.<sup>22</sup> A homily preached by John Chrysostom in

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<sup>18</sup> Asterius of Amasea, *Laudatio s. Phocae* (CPG 3260; BHG 1538). Cf. Leemans 2003: 167.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.* 9.1-10.1.

<sup>20</sup> John Chrysostom, *De s. hieromartyre Phoca* (CPG 4364; BHG 1537).

<sup>21</sup> See Downey 1961: 512 and Mayer and Allen 2012: 103.

<sup>22</sup> John Chrysostom, *In s. Romanum* (CPG 4353) PG 50.605-612.

praise of St Eustathius a few days earlier, as John himself informs us, also lacks specific statements about the place of preaching.<sup>23</sup> John's comment that 'this church has risen up more brilliant than any column over the martyr' most likely refers to the present congregation, or to the Antiochene Christians in general, whose sentiments for the martyr surpass any ostentatious display of devotion through impressive memorials, rather than to the building in which the liturgical celebration takes place.<sup>24</sup>

Further examples of the absence of spatial indications from hagiographic homilies could be produced from the extensive homiletic literature of the fourth-century. Yet it is from the fifth century onwards that the sense of spatiality in the homilies becomes remarkably less pronounced. One of the reasons for our limited insight into the location of the preaching event during the *panegyris* is in fact the very few encomia that survive compared to the fourth century. With the exception of Severus of Antioch and Andrew of Crete, notable preachers between the fifth and eighth centuries have left us only a limited number of hagiographic sermons (e.g. Leontius of Constantinople CPG 7889; Gregory of Antioch CPG 7390; Sophronios of Jerusalem CPG 7640, 7645, 7648; John of Euboea CPG 8137), while others, such as Anastasios of Sinai and Germanos of Constantinople, none at all.<sup>25</sup> However, far from being a quantitative issue, the decrease in the evidence for topography in homilies seems to depend closely on changes in encomiastic preaching and in particular in the symbolic significance of space for the preacher and his audience. A great number of early hagiographic homilies were preached at saints' tombs and shrines, which very often

<sup>23</sup> John Chrysostom, *In s. Eustathium Antiochenum* (CPG 4352) PG 50.597-606. John states in *In illud: Domine, non est in homine* (CPG 4419) PG 56.154.17-29 that he had recently preached on three occasions: on the first with regard to the dispute of Peter and Paul at Antioch, and later on the feasts of St Eustathius and St Romanus. Cf. Mayer and Neil 2006: 49.

<sup>24</sup> See the passage in John Chrysostom, *In s. Eustathium Antiochenum* PG 50. 600.24-36 (tr. Mayer and Neil). The dubiousness of the term 'church' at this point is pointed out by Mayer and Neil 2006: 54 fn. 4.

<sup>25</sup> There survive thirteen homilies on saints by Severus of Antioch (see Allen 1998: 208) and eleven by Andrew of Crete (CPG 8185, 8186, 8187, 8188, 8190, 8194, 8195, 8196, 8203, 8212, 8213) as well as one dominical/hagiographic (CPG 8175). The fact that they lived in the sixth and eighth century respectively demonstrates that hagiographic preaching was not in decline after the fourth century. The lack of more evidence for encomia on saints should rather be attributed to the non-transmission of such texts.

contained their relics. But already in this period we witness the delivery of encomia to saints whose cult was not associated with a local burial site or church and the annual veneration of relics. That was the case with holy figures such as the apostles and prophets whose veneration enjoyed a long-standing, universal status in the church.<sup>26</sup> Sometimes the veneration of new saints was also disconnected from the presence of their physical remains or a place dedicated to them. In the *Homily on St Eustathius*, John Chrysostom mentions that, although the saint's body was buried in Thrace, his memory was cherished by the faithful of Antioch despite the distance that separated them from him.<sup>27</sup> He even makes the bold statement that in fact Eustathius' tomb was among them, not in a physical way, but instead each one of the faithful was a living, spiritual tomb that hosted the saint.<sup>28</sup>

Homilies of this kind provided the antecedent for encomia on saints who became part of the liturgical calendars across the Christian world beyond the place of origin of their cult, a process accelerated by the diffusion of relics.<sup>29</sup> Thus, in later centuries, it became the norm to celebrate the feasts of widely recognised saints, even if without the presence of relics or a church dedicated to them. What this had as a consequence was that panegyrics in honour of saints that lacked any particular connection with the place of delivery were dissociated from the spontaneity caused by the location. The prominence of sacred places like tombs and the mobility associated with processions, though central in many early panegyrics, was now absent. As a result, liturgical topography became increasingly secondary in later encomia, since it did not import much into the dynamic of the homilies, unless it was directly related to their subject, in the cases, for example, in which the memory of a saint was celebrated in a church dedicated to him. In this respect, later homilies do not become more sterilised and

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<sup>26</sup> See e.g. Asterius of Amasea, *On Daniel and Susanna* and *On Peter and Paul*.

<sup>27</sup> John Chrysostom, *In s. Eustathium Antiochenum* (CPG 4352; BHG 644) PG 50.600.16-22.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.* PG 50.600.31-3.

<sup>29</sup> Interestingly, one of the earliest recorded translations of relics is that of Sts Timothy, Andrew, and Luke to Constantinople (356-357) which in the *Passion of St Artemius* appears entrusted to St Artemius by emperor Constantius II (cf. Noga-Banai 2008: 131).

insensitive to external circumstances than earlier ones; on the contrary, they reflect precisely the changes in the liturgical circumstances and in the role played by physical space which took place after the fourth century.

In keeping with this pattern, there is no internal information regarding the location where John of Damascus delivered his sermons. We may assume that the monastery was one of the main sites of his homiletic activity. As Louth correctly points out, John often addresses audiences in which monastics and clergy have a marked presence, suggesting the delivery of homilies also in a monastic setting.<sup>30</sup> Although preaching was normally the task of bishops and priests, monastic preachers, both before and after John, were not without precedent. In the sixth century one encounters the influential preacher Symeon Stylites the Younger,<sup>31</sup> and in the 900s Niketas David Paphlagon, one of most prolific homilists of the period, produced dozens of encomia during his monastic years.<sup>32</sup> Besides, laymen with a talent in rhetoric had already begun to take up the role of the homilist, Kosmas Vestitor (mid-8th - mid-9th century) being a notable example.<sup>33</sup> As Mary Cunningham states, 'It would appear that by this period apostolic authority was not a prerequisite for preaching in the church; piety, and above all, the ability to deliver a high-style rhetorical oration also represented sufficient qualifications.'<sup>34</sup> It is very likely, then, that John would have been allowed to preach even before his ordination as a priest. The date of the latter cannot be established, but should not necessarily be assumed to have affected his preaching activity in the context of his monastic community; if anything, it would have increased his authority as preacher.

John's role as an ordained monk could, however, have created new conditions for addressing the faithful. It is as presbyter in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem

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<sup>30</sup> Louth 2002: 229.

<sup>31</sup> See Allen 1998: 204-5.

<sup>32</sup> See Antonopoulou 1998: 330-3.

<sup>33</sup> For more details on the most prominent ninth- and tenth-century lay preachers see Antonopoulou 1997 and 1998.

<sup>34</sup> Cunningham 2008b: 873.

that John is said to have delivered the *Homily on the Fig-Tree*, as the heading of the homily testifies. The attestation of the church where the homily was preached – despite being a unique instance and preserved in only one manuscript – is important because it suggests a preaching context outside a monastic environment. Furthermore, one of the few self-references in his works, contained in the *Letter on the Trisagion Hymn*, also represents John's connection with the city. Discussing the theological stance of the Jerusalemite patriarch, John V (706-735), regarding the trisagion hymn, the Damascene claims that no one knew the patriarch's thoughts on the matter better than him: the patriarch 'never breathed a breath of doctrine which he did not impart into me as his disciple'.<sup>35</sup> John's assertion presupposes a close relationship with the patriarch which would only be possible if he resided in the city, at least over certain periods of time. Jerusalem, therefore, represents the place where much of John's homiletic activity probably extended, a fact that is also compatible with the authority that came from his status as a priest. Even if none of his homilies mention Jerusalem as the site of their delivery, there are reasons to suspect that two of his panegyrics result from his role in the liturgical life of the city.

The *Encomium of St Barbara* deserves some attention in this respect. In the introduction to the homily John reprimands his audience for being distracted by secular spectacles, such as horse races and athletic contests, instead of devoting their time and attention to the one worthy spectacle, the ordeal of the martyr Barbara.<sup>36</sup> John's comment is significant because its rhetorical appeal depends on the context of an urban setting. To advise the faithful to retract their mind from outside distractions of the kind John describes seems out of place, if the homily is delivered at an isolated monastery in the Judean desert. By contrast, the tempting thoughts of participating in events that happen to take place at the same time as the

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<sup>35</sup> *Trisag.* 26.13-5: Τίς γὰρ οἶδε τοῦ μακαριωτάτου Ἰωάννου τοῦ πατριάρχου νόημα ἐμοῦ πλέον; Οὐδεῖς. Ὅς, ἵνα τάληθές εἶπω, οὐκ ἀνέπνευσε πνοὴν δογματικὴν πρόποτε, ἣν ἐμοὶ ὡς μαθητῇ οὐκ ἀνέθετο.

<sup>36</sup> *Barb.* 2.3-10.

*panegyris* reflect perfectly a vibrant urban centre like Jerusalem. In his analysis of the archaeological evidence from a number of sites in Palestine, J. Humphrey argues against the construction at any point of a hippodrome in Jerusalem and points only to the existence of an amphitheatre.<sup>37</sup> Yet one of his conclusions is also that hippodromes in the regions of Syria, Palestine and Egypt entered a phase of decline only after the mid-sixth century or even later. We cannot rule out the possibility that such events were still taking place in the time of John Damascene, either on a more restricted scale or in a less ‘institutionalised’ form. It is perhaps important that John in his homily refers to ‘horse races’ (ἵπποδρομίας) and not to a ‘hippodrome’, since the lack of a monumental building functioning as a hippodrome does not exclude informal horse races. The same is true of the ‘wrestling grounds’ (παλαίστρας), which were also most likely non-monumental structures, while the rest of the ‘gymnastic contests’ (γυμνικῶν ἀγώνων) to which John refers, must have taken place in similar contexts.<sup>38</sup>

If Jerusalem is the place where one would be expected to encounter such activities, the informality of these events – if we grant that they were informal, as John’s remark suggests – allows for the possibility that they also took place in small urban centres and non-urban settlements. It is meaningful to ask, then, whether, on the occasion of St Barbara’s feast day, John could have preached the sermon in a church devoted to the saint in a place other than Jerusalem. According to the material evidence, the only relevant site in somewhat close proximity to Jerusalem connected with St Barbara is a chapel in the village of Abud, around 30 km northwest of the city, which appears to have been built in the sixth century.<sup>39</sup> We can only speculate whether John might have preached there, although the homily itself may

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<sup>37</sup> Humphrey 1986: 529-30; see *ibid.* 438-539 for hippodromes and horse racing in the eastern provinces of Roman empire. For a recent discussion of the archaeology of Palestine specifically, see Magness 2013.

<sup>38</sup> Interestingly, iconographic depictions of gymnastic games, acrobats, and wrestling, along with hunting and bathing scenes, are preserved in the famous Umayyad complex of Qusayr ‘Amra in Jordan (early eighth century); see Vernot 1996: 258 and Fowden 2004: 55-6.

<sup>39</sup> Schneider 1933: 155; Ovadia 1970: 17; Taha 1997: 360.



provide a clue. At the end of his speech, John admires how the font in Barbara's birth town, where she first openly confessed Christ and where her relics are preserved, is a source of healing for the sick, and remarks that her healing grace is not confined only to that place (ἐν ἐκείνῳ μόνον τῷ χώρῳ) but spreads to everyone all over the world (πανταχῇ τῆς οἰκουμένης) who celebrates her annual commemoration.<sup>40</sup> John remains silent here, as well as in the rest of the homily, about any other such 'place' as a church or shrine which would bear her name and grace and in which his congregation would now have gathered to honour her memory, and so makes it less likely that the homily was preached in a church dedicated to the martyr.

With regard to the *Passion of St Artemius*, the homily does not provide the slightest evidence from which to make any conjecture about the location of its delivery which could well be John's monastery or Jerusalem. The archaeological record, moreover, does not support the existence of any church dedicated to St Artemius in the vicinity, so it is fairly safe to discard the possibility that John visited a place with a strong presence of Artemius' cult on the occasion of the saint's *panegyris*.<sup>41</sup> The *Encomium of St John Chrysostom*, however, may still prove that the context of John's hagiographic homilies is not entirely out of reach. At the beginning of the homily John of Damascus makes in passing a remark about the encouragement of 'a God-loving man' who has requested John to preach in honour of the saint. That man, to all appearances present at the time of the speech, is held in high esteem by John, who also admits that he owes him many a good turn.<sup>42</sup> We can only speculate about the identity of the person John refers to. He may well have been his superior at the monastery where he resided. The way, however, John talks about him, as someone to whom he owes many debts of gratitude, places the two in a relationship that might have been different from

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<sup>40</sup> *Barb.* 22.38-53.

<sup>41</sup> A search in Pringle 1993, 1998, 2007, 2009, and Ovadiah 1970 yielded no results.

<sup>42</sup> *Chrys.* 1.11-3.

that of a superior with his subordinate, one, perhaps, better explained in terms of mentor and disciple. It is possible that John V, the patriarch of Jerusalem, is the man John alludes to. John, as we saw, enjoyed a close relationship with the patriarch. It would not be surprising if at a service for the feast of John Chrysostom presided by the patriarch, the latter gave his permission to the Damascene to preach to the faithful, a practice that had precedents.<sup>43</sup>

A reference to Jerusalem may provide a further clue as to the preaching of the homily. Before commencing, John of Damascus requests the saint's grace whose impact during his life was such that he influenced the life of whole towns and cities. The reason was his spiritual preparation: 'For beginning with yourself and truly making yourself into 'Jerusalem', the city of the living God, a dwelling of the holy spirit, you reached, through your word, the ends of the world everywhere on earth'.<sup>44</sup> Perhaps the Damascene's reference to John Chrysostom's conversion into a spiritual Jerusalem alludes to the very location where the homily was delivered, the city of Jerusalem itself. That being so, is it possible that on account of the feast of St John Chrysostom, the Damascene was present in a church dedicated to the saint, where he was invited to preach? The material evidence does not suggest the existence in Jerusalem of any important church devoted to St John Chrysostom.<sup>45</sup> A small chapel attached to the church of St Michael in Jerusalem seems to be a later addition.<sup>46</sup> Yet an intriguing clue is presented by the presence in Jerusalem of the church of St Sabas. The church existed since the sixth century and is described as *metochion* of the Mar Saba monastery in the twelfth century.<sup>47</sup> When the church came to be property of the monastery is unknown, but it stands as proof of the strong presence of Sabaite (and Judean) monasticism in

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<sup>43</sup> Multiple preaching took many forms and could include preachers of the same or different ranks (bishops, priests, and lay people), or entailed preaching at various points during a liturgical service. The latter case is best exemplified by the trilogies of John of Damascus and Andrew of Crete in the eighth century. See Antonopoulou 1997: 99, Barkhuizen 1998: 199.

<sup>44</sup> *Chrys.* 2.1-2: ἀρχάμενος γὰρ ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ καὶ σαυτὸν ὄντως Ἱερουσαλὴμ κατεσκευάσας, πόλιν θεοῦ ζῶντος.

<sup>45</sup> Based on Pringle 2007.

<sup>46</sup> Pringle 2007: 336.

<sup>47</sup> See Pringle 2007: 356 and Patrich 2001: 16-7.

the city of Jerusalem, of which John was very likely a representative. The sources also add that a part of John Chrysostom's relics was kept in the church of St Sabas.<sup>48</sup> It is difficult to know whether John might have preached his encomium on John Chrysostom there on account of the presence of the saint's relics. Neither this nor the two hints suggested above – the identification of the unknown man of the homily with John V and the literary allusion to Jerusalem – are sufficient indications of a concrete preaching environment. They do, however, narrow down the range of possible locations for the delivery of the *Encomium of St John Chrysostom*.

### *Occasion and circumstances of delivery*

The distinctiveness of space as evinced in the diverse preaching environments and their changing prioritisation over time indicates the peculiar development of the hagiographic encomium. It was a type of Christian oratory with strong external associations that followed closely the fate of the very concrete liturgical context in which it operated: the *panegyris*. The *panegyris* did not only dictate the spatiality of the homilies. The axis around which the content of an encomium spun was also aligned with the character of the feast. That was in principle commemorative, a recount of a saint's life and/or martyrdom that normally coincided with the date of his death.<sup>49</sup> Early preachers liked to emphasise in their speech the

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<sup>48</sup> Pringle 2007: 357.

<sup>49</sup> Limberis 2011: 15. Although the anniversary of a saint's death was the main reason for a *panegyris*, the practice of translating the relics of saints from their original resting place to other centres of devotion marked the occasion for the development of a comparable type of panegyric sermon, one that celebrated the arrival of the relics at their final destination and formed part of the ceremonies and liturgical acts of that day. John Chrysostom's *De. s. hieromartyre Phoca* is one of the earliest examples. In due time the commemoration of such events entered the liturgical calendar and panegyrics on the translation of relics became a standard form of encomiastic rhetoric. See, for example, the long tradition of panegyrics on the translation of John Chrysostom's relics: Kosmas Vestitor (BHG 877v-x, 877y, 877z, 878, 878a), Niketas David Paphlagon (BHG 881c), Konstantinos VII Porphyrogenetos (BHG 878d).

regularity of these annual celebrations and the fervour with which people participated in them. Gregory of Nyssa asserts that ‘even if we celebrate this day with annual feasts, yet the stream of people arriving here because of their zeal for the martyrs never ceases’, and John Chrysostom referring to saint Pelagia remarks that ‘in death and after so many years a single girl year after year attracts to herself an entire city and such a large population, and no passage of time has interrupted the sequence of this honour.’<sup>50</sup> Preachers articulated the determination of the faithful to preserve the memory of the saints and sought to capitalise on the increasingly prominent role of religious festivals in order to maintain and extend what they saw as a pious practice.

At the same time we witness the important capacity of panegyric discourse for flexibility and for an effective response to the requirements of preaching. We saw how sermons as oral messages effortlessly accommodated the anxiety of early homilists regarding the institution of the *panegyris* in those early stages, and helped affirm its value and ensure its future as a religious practice. This is a quality that the panegyric discourse possessed because it too belonged to an early formative period in which it was more easily subject to and reflective of external influences. Thus, not only the development of religious festivals was reflected in panegyric sermons. Casual references to matters that were not strictly relevant to the theme of the feast intruded repeatedly into a preacher’s encomiastic speech. To take an example, as much as being a memorial ceremony, a saint’s feast was also the ideal occasion for instruction thanks to the number of faithful in attendance, and so hagiographic homilies were habitually interspersed with extensive digressions of a didactic nature. In the *Homily on Romanus* mentioned earlier, John Chrysostom takes the opportunity to make a comment on envy and its remedy, love, before commencing the narrative of the martyr’s passion.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *De s. Theodoro* 70, 6-10 (trans. adapted from Leemans et al. 2003); John Chrysostom, *De s. Pelagia virgine et martyre* PG 50.582.65-583.3 (CPG 4350; BHG 1477) (trans. Leemans et al. 2003).

<sup>51</sup> John Chrysostom, *In s. Romanum* PG 50.607.14-58.

Such fluidity, however, was anything but constant. By the time of John of Damascus panegyric homilies had changed orientation and the balance had tipped in favour of the theme of the feast and less of the circumstances and episodes marking the *panegyris*. We can already observe in the hagiographic homilies of Proclus of Constantinople (fifth century) that the *panegyris* as a liturgical event does not stand out for its exceptional character but is considered a standardised part of the yearly cycle of liturgical feasts.<sup>52</sup> Perhaps Proclus's words in the prologue of his *Homily on All Saints*, in an otherwise typical formula for passing to the main part of a sermon, carry much more meaning than first meet the eye: 'Therefore, since the ordeals of the martyrs have assembled us together,' he says, 'let us also put their ordeals into words'.<sup>53</sup> Proclus and his congregation have answered the call of the martyrs; indeed to return the favour, he will narrate their struggles to the benefit of everyone present. But we do not observe the same enthusiastic response of the faithful to the call of the martyrs which earlier preachers so vividly describe. It is not that fifth-century Constantinopolitans were less fervent; Proclus' tone simply reflects a society already accustomed for many decades to an annual cycle of an ever-increasing number of religious feasts which affected to a considerable extent the private and public life of Christians. The contrast with the panegyrics of the fourth-century homilists is clear. For them the *panegyris* was more than a religious celebration; it was also the means to bolster the social standing of the Christian communities. It was important, therefore, to articulate in their discourse the character of the *panegyris* reflected in elements such as the occasion on which it started to be observed, its annual observation, and the period of the year in which it was celebrated.

The pattern that is already visible in Proclus's hagiographic homilies will become the rule. In the homilies of John Damascene the lack of more concrete information about the occasion of the preaching sets the tone. In the *Encomium of St Barbara* John says that he will narrate

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<sup>52</sup> See for instance, Homily 17 and 34.

<sup>53</sup> Text in (ed.) Leroy 1967: 252.

the ordeal of Barbara, since it is the day that the *panegyris* of the martyr is being celebrated, and in the *Encomium of St Artemius* he invites the congregation, the ‘holy *panegyris*’, as he calls it, to join him in the relation of the saint’s achievements and martyrdom.<sup>54</sup> Beyond that nothing more is told about the celebration of the feast in the context of the *panegyris*. As for the *Encomium of St John Chrysostom*, we do not even possess the most basic piece of information, which is the occasion for which it was delivered. That it was preached on the day of the saint’s *panegyris* is almost certain; the question is on which of the two. The liturgical calendar assigned two feasts in honour of John Chrysostom: 13 November, the date on which his repose was commemorated (originally 14 September), and 27 January, the date of the translation of his relics. Already in the fourth century panegyrics were composed not only for the annual commemoration of a saint’s death but also to celebrate the translation of their relics or other important moments in the life of the Church as is the birth of St John the Baptist.<sup>55</sup> Even if John Damascene’s homily on John Chrysostom concerns the transfer of his relics to Constantinople, it is remarkably sparse in liturgical and ritual details. The homily is almost exclusively a portrait of John Chrysostom and an account of his life. This last detail makes one deduce, at least indirectly, the possible occasion for the delivery of the encomium. Although the editor of John of Damascus had argued for 27 January as the day of delivery, in fact, the story of John Chrysostom’s translation occupies no more than a few lines, indicating 13 November, the commemoration of his death, as a more plausible date.<sup>56</sup>

Early preachers also referred to the liturgical circumstances of the *panegyris*. We have seen that preaching took place after the processions. Occasionally, information is given to us regarding other activities including the celebration of the eucharist and all-night vigils.<sup>57</sup> With

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<sup>54</sup> *Barb.* 1.18; *Artem.* 1.3.

<sup>55</sup> The feast of the Nativity of St John the Baptist is attested as early as the fourth century, and Augustine had preached a sermon for the occasion; see Krausmüller 2011: 226, fn. 41.

<sup>56</sup> Louth 1998: 258 also finds no compelling reason for rejecting 13 November.

<sup>57</sup> See Mayer and Allen 2000: 95-6, and Mayer and Neil 2006: 25-6.

the standardisation of the structure of the *panegyris* we start to lose sight of details about the liturgical circumstances of the delivery. Already during an early period it was customary for homilists to preach in the context of the eucharist, and we can safely assume that panegyric homilies followed the same pattern and were usually delivered in the course of the liturgy after the reading of the gospel.<sup>58</sup> That must also have been the case during the seventh century onwards, as an isolated reference in Sophronius of Jerusalem confirms.<sup>59</sup>

For John's hagiographic homilies there is no internal evidence alluding to the liturgical circumstances nor are there any indications for processions. It is fairly possible that they were also preached during the eucharist. The only one that might be thought to belong to a different context is the *Passion of St Artemius*. The liturgy was certainly the ideal occasion for a preacher to address his congregation, since attendance was expected to be higher. In principle, therefore, there is no convincing reason for assuming that the *Encomium of St Barbara* and the *Encomium of St John Chrysostom* were not delivered in the context of the liturgy on the saints' feast days. However, the exceptional length of the *Passion of St Artemius* may suggest that the evening or morning offices could figure as alternative preaching occasions. In the early seventh century Anastasios of Antioch stops his sermon on the Annunciation because the sun is already setting, which suggests that he was preaching during the office of vespers.<sup>60</sup> John of Damascus too delivered his three homilies on the Dormition in the course of an all-night vigil, and, interestingly, alludes to the time of the day at which they were preached, perhaps reflecting the novelty of such a practice.<sup>61</sup> There is therefore evidence that preaching in this period took place outside the liturgy, especially on

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<sup>58</sup> See Antonopoulou 1997: 97-8.

<sup>59</sup> PG 87(3).3353. (ref. in Antonopoulou 1997: 98)

<sup>60</sup> PG 89.1385B (ref. in Antonopoulou 1997: 99).

<sup>61</sup> It should be remembered that trilogies appear for the first time in the eighth century and were also composed by John's contemporaries, Andrew of Crete and Germanos of Constantinople.

important feasts. The problem is that all existing instances concern the great Marian feasts.<sup>62</sup> We do not possess any hagiographic homilies that were delivered manifestly during the services of a saint's feast day. It is possible that the weariness presupposed by a lengthy homily such as the *Passion of St Artemius* made it more suitable for a non-eucharistic service which would also presumably have been attended by fewer people. But even so, it is hard to determine the moment the homily was preached, since we cannot yet fix the precise structure of the *panegyris*. We do not know whether saints' *panegyreis* involved an all-night vigil, and hence all the sequence of services from vespers to the divine liturgy, and if so, which saints were honoured with the celebration of a vigil.<sup>63</sup> Was Artemius included among them (or indeed Barbara and John Chrysostom)? Would a homily preached during a vigil and before the eucharist be destined for the vespers or postponed for the morning office? The same might be asked for celebrations that did not include a vigil: was preaching preferred during vespers or matins? Unfortunately, these are questions we are not yet in a position to answer directly, and less so with regard to the *panegyreis* on saints, and preaching outside the eucharist with regard to the *Passion of Artemius* can neither be proven nor disproven.

The objective of these reflections is to encourage an approach to these texts that is considerate of the external dynamics of John's panegyrics and treats them as manifestations of a communal act that took place at a specific time and location, and involved members of the local Chalcedonian community and John himself as their preacher and priest. Surely, many of the questions about the 'where' and 'when' of these homilies remain unanswered, because the information is simply absent from the text, although a thorough attempt has been made to assess the available evidence and exclude certain possibilities, while leaving room

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<sup>62</sup> Louth also notes that two of John's homilies, *On Holy Saturday* and *On the fig-tree*, are expositions of Gospel passages that were assigned to the matins, which could give further support to the argument for a non-eucharistic preaching context: 'My suspicion is that preaching at Matins had become by the eighth century, at least in Palestine, a monastic practice.'; Louth 1998: 258.

<sup>63</sup> On the uncertainty over the structure of vigils, see again Louth 1998: 258, with reference to John's trilogy *On the Dormition*.



for others. However, it is precisely the need to avoid dismissing these texts as ‘lifeless’, as deprived of the vivid and intriguing details of earlier homilies, which makes this discussion urgent. John’s homilies, like so many others from that period, were as vivid and engaging for their audiences as the homilies of a John Chrysostom for us today. In fact, what for the modern scholar appears as a ‘weakness’ in the homilies of John and his contemporaries, namely the lack of evidence about the context of preaching, for them it was a strength. For paying less attention to the events that were unfolding around them within the context of the *panegyris* – a development that had in fact come about due to changes in the character of the *panegyris* itself – preachers were now able to focus their message elsewhere and adopt new methods of instruction. In the case of John Damascene’s hagiographic homilies, these included a new way of recounting the lives of the saints. To this I will now turn my attention.

## 2 | The art of preaching: composition, *topoi*, and *metaphrasis*

Encomia on saints represent a distinct subset of homiletic literature in which elements of biography and panegyric were integrally combined.<sup>1</sup> The chief purpose of an encomium was to extol a saint's achievements and present him/her as a paradigm of Christian virtue. To this end, homilists drew on material from saints' *lives* and *passions*, texts which recorded the life events of holy figures. It was a process inherent in the ceaseless recounting of the edifying stories of the heroically virtuous over the course of the liturgical year and it frequently resulted in these texts going 'through various phases of accretion and rhetorical reshaping'.<sup>2</sup> The study of John of Damascus' homilies should also begin with a review of the literature on which it relied for inspiration. The reason is simple, although not entirely obvious at first glance. For it is only after a thorough reading that the homilies reveal the high degree of complexity and reflection behind their composition. The homilies are essentially formed by various components, which correspond to a combination of John's own discourse with the literary material borrowed and paraphrased from other written sources, all merged into a single whole. The extent of the phenomenon is such that preaching about saints, in the form in which we encounter it in John, went beyond the mere use of rhetoric as an instrument of praise, to become, in addition, an art of studying and employing the texts of the saints' *lives*.

The importance of a systematic investigation into a preacher's resources in primary literature has received considerable attention in recent years. Antonopoulou argues that it is 'a *conditio sine qua non* for drawing the picture of a Byzantine homilist and the literary

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<sup>1</sup> 'One particularly seamless but complex transition was the evolution of conventions of panegyric to accommodate the needs of Christian hagiography and biography, which merge into one another', Whitby 2010: 247. The interconnection of the two genres emerges clearly in the *Life of Constantine* and the *Life of Antony*, and later in the funerary orations of the Cappadocians: see, for example, Cameron 2000 and Konstan 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Whitby 2010: 248.

assessment of his production.<sup>3</sup> As we shall see, the incorporation of hagiographical and other primary material into the homilies becomes a defining feature of John's preaching style, providing a framework in which the central place that the saint occupies in the encomium is also reflected in the reproduction of the narratives about him or her. In all of John's hagiographic homilies, material from primary sources is reused, to a greater or lesser extent, reformulated, and modified in order to be accommodated to the new literary context of the encomium. Exactly how John does this in every homily will be discussed in the next three sections.

But John's rhetorical technique is worth examining not only for clarifying his method of composition but because it also provides the indispensable clues for interpreting his message. The changes that the preacher applied to the borrowed texts and the new environment in which they are found within his discourse are key markers for new directions of meaning in the final product. So is the retaining of many of the literary commonplaces, or *topoi*, that accompany much of the hagiographical literature to which he had recourse. Despite their standardised and repetitive nature, John's decision to use such *topoi*, and often reinforce their presence in comparison with the original accounts, was a conscious choice with consequences for the understanding of the content of his sermons (fourth section). After all, his homilies had interests and purposes different from those of his sources, and many of the topics which are dealt with in his encomia and are treated in chapters 3, 4, and 5 are precisely the result of the way he adapted his primary material and unfolded the potential of commonplace themes.

It is this curious mixture of recycled literary material and homiletic discourse which in the end makes John's hagiographic sermons stand out as manifestations of a developing trend in homiletics. In an attempt to measure 'the degree of his creative power and the extent of his

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<sup>3</sup> Antonopoulou 1997: 116.

contribution to the genre', which Antonopoulou also counts among the benefits of the study of a homilist's sources,<sup>4</sup> we find ourselves faced with the founding principles of the metaphrastic movement, the practice of rewriting older hagiographic texts according to new, elevated literary standards, which was popularised after the ninth century. The evidence of John's homilies, however, indicates that *metaphrasis* had much earlier precedents. His reuse and upgrading of older texts about saints opens the possibility for a reconsideration of the concept of *metaphrasis* and its origins, and, as will be argued in the fifth section, allows us to see John as a representative of an early formative stage of the metaphrastic movement.

### *The Encomium of St Barbara*

A saint widely venerated both in eastern and western Christendom, St Barbara belonged to the multitude of exemplary Christians who embodied through their martyrdom the triumph of the Church over her persecutors and the restoration of human nature to its original perfect state.<sup>5</sup> From an early time, accounts of martyrdom circulated among the faithful in texts such as acts of martyrs and *passions* or through correspondence.<sup>6</sup> Yet attempts to establish the historicity of many of those early martyrs often meet with little success. The reason is that martyrial texts rarely provide even the most basic circumstantial evidence to support the historicity of their protagonists, and when they do, its validity is often questionable. It is possible that the stories of those legendary martyrs reflected real events which were later

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<sup>4</sup> Antonopoulou 1997: 116.

<sup>5</sup> For the spread of St Barbara's cult in the East and West, see Nemitz and Thierse 1996: 81-186. If we accept that the first Greek *passion* of St Barbara was composed in the seventh century at the latest (see further on), we may place the beginning of her cult at least in the fifth/sixth century. In the West, the saint appears first in the *Martyrologium Romanum* from the early eighth century onwards: Eberhart 1988: 13.

<sup>6</sup> The different types of early hagiographical documents are dealt with by Barnes 2010: 43-95. See also Bisbee 1988 and Hinterberger 2014. Selected martyrs' acts can be found in von Gebhardt 1902; Knopf, Krüger, and Ruhbach 1965; Musurillo 1972.

transformed by time, collective memory, and not least, by the authors' personal judgment.<sup>7</sup> However, for the writers, redactors, and translators of acts and *passions* who engaged in the narration of the dreadful events leading up to the martyrs' deaths, critical methodology and an inquiry into the veracity of those events did not have priority over the edification of their readers and the emotional effect on them.

It is not, then, surprising that for St Barbara we also possess very little and unverifiable information. The daughter of a pagan nobleman, Barbara was said to have lived in the reign of Maximian, and was martyred for her Christian faith by the hand of her own father in 306. The Greek account of her martyrdom is preserved in several manuscripts, the earliest of which is dated to the eleventh century.<sup>8</sup> Her *passion*, however, must have existed in written form since at least the seventh century on the grounds that it necessarily antedates John of Damascus, since he relied on it to compose his *Encomium of St Barbara*, as will be seen shortly. There are currently two editions of Barbara's *passion*, based on different selections of manuscripts. The first one represents a newer version of the saint's legend and contains elements that are almost certainly interpolations of a later date, such as the inclusion in the account of details about the martyrdom of St Juliana, who was co-martyred with Barbara.<sup>9</sup> An earlier version of the legend is preserved in codex Vaticanus 866 and forms the basis for the second extant edition by A. Wirth.<sup>10</sup> The similarities between the text of Vaticanus 866 and the martyrdom account in John Damascene's *Encomium of Barbara* led Weyh to the conclusion that the author of the *passion* in the Vaticanus 866 and John had access to a

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<sup>7</sup> On saints' legends and the issue of fictional hagiography, see the seminal work of Delehaye 1905/6, and id. 1921, esp. 171-226; more recently, Barnes 2010: 151-98.

<sup>8</sup> Codex Vaticanus 866: Nemitz and Thierse 1996: 12. Her *passion* otherwise appears in Latin, Syriac, and Romance languages; see Williams 1975: 156 with bibliography. Some of the texts in Syriac have been edited in Bedjan 1892: 345-55 and received discussion in Weyh 1911/12. The Greek strand of the tradition provides us with the oldest versions of the *passion* and Greek is unanimously accepted as the original language of composition: see Weyh 1911/12: 35-44, who also argues that the Syriac texts he examined were translated from Greek; also Eberhart 1988: 14-5; Nemitz & Thierse 1996: 12-4.

<sup>9</sup> For the text (*Passio Barbarae* BHG 213.214), Viteau 1897: 87-105. Cf. Weyh 1911/12: 13.

<sup>10</sup> Wirth 1892: 103-111 (*Passio Barbarae* BHG 215).

common source *passion*, which is now lost.<sup>11</sup> The text of Vaticanus 866 as edited in Wirth is now the variant most closely related to that original *passion*, and will therefore be used in the present study for purposes of comparison with John's homily.

Although a written tradition about Barbara's martyrdom can be traced back to at least the seventh century, there is still a huge chronological gap between Barbara's death and the first written *passion* that we can tell of. This probably resulted in some details of the saint's original story being obscured. For example, no less than eleven cities or regions are claimed to be the places where Barbara was martyred, though modern-day North Turkey appears as the most likely location.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, the surviving versions of the passion narrative do not generally show extraordinary variation, pointing to a fairly well established written tradition which was available to John Damascene at the time he wrote his panegyric homily in the first half of the eighth century.

The *passion* that John had at his disposal was not simply a reference work which he consulted for biographical details and anecdotal stories. It was rather a core element in constructing the sermon by supplying a model to be copied. To understand this choice on the homilist's part and its implications, we need first to consider the structure of the homily. Overall, four parts can be distinguished. The homily begins with a prologue (§§1-3) in which the preacher emphasises the greatness of the subject matter and invites the faithful to the spiritual arena where the conflict between the martyr and the authorities of evil takes place. In a narrative introduction (§§4-6), he explains God's divine plan for the salvation of humanity and how the Devil, filled with envy, roused a persecution against God's faithful. Barbara, a victim of pagan lawlessness, was one of many who were persecuted for their Christian faith. The narrative of her martyrdom forms the longest part of the homily (§§7-17). Barbara was

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<sup>11</sup> Weyh 1911/12: 29-31.

<sup>12</sup> Nemitz & Thierse 1996: 61-8. John himself avoids any reference to the name of the place of Barbara's martyrdom in his homily.

the only daughter of a wealthy pagan named Dioscorus. When one day he departed on a journey, the saint came down from the tower in which her father had her confined to oversee the construction of a bathhouse which was being built on his orders. Once there, she commanded the builders to construct three windows instead of two. On his return, Dioscorus inquired about the third window. Barbara confessed that the light of the three windows symbolised the light of the Holy Trinity. Her father, enraged, tortured her, imprisoned her, and presented her to the governor. Barbara was subsequently subjected to trials and harsh punishments which she miraculously endured thanks to divine intervention. She was finally decapitated by her own father and received the crown of martyrdom. The narrative is frequently interrupted by the preacher who extols the saint for her steadfastness.<sup>13</sup> The encomium reaches its highpoint in the fourth and final section (§§18-23) in which John addresses the saint in a series of salutations and eulogising apostrophes, and entreats her to intercede with God for those in need and for himself who is offering this humble encomium to her.

Within a balanced structure in which the main passion narrative is preceded and followed by an equal number of sections (six (§§1-6) and six (§§18-23), respectively), the account of Barbara's martyrdom constitutes the backbone of the homily around which everything else is organised. The expression of its prominence in structural terms corresponds to the saint's centrality in the liturgical celebrations in her honour and increases the laudatory force of John's speech. But the story of Barbara's passion is the focus of attention not only structurally but also thematically. That John of Damascus had access to hagiographical documents concerning St Barbara is evident by the striking similarity of the homily with the early *passion*, whose comparison demonstrates that John does not deviate much from the

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<sup>13</sup> The passion sections form a sequential but not continuous narrative. There are interruptions by the preacher, for instance, exclamations (8.24-32; 12.18-23), remarks (9.21-29), and addresses to the audience (15.11-26; 16.9-26). For practical reasons, however, it is still useful to refer to sections 7-17 as the 'passion narrative', since they are clearly marked from the rest of the homily.

source text, although the degree of their resemblance is varying. Occasionally, not only the overall sense, but also the original vocabulary and phrasing remain significantly unaltered. Compare, for instance, the beginnings of the passion accounts in the two works:

Ἐν τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ βασιλεύοντος  
Μαξιμιανοῦ, ἡγεμονεύοντος Μαρκιανοῦ  
ἦν τις τόπαρχος ὀνόματι Διόσκορος  
πλούσιος σφόδρα, Ἕλληνα δὲ ὑπῆρχεν  
σεβόμενος τὰ εἰδώλα. Οὗτος ἔσχεν  
θυγατέρα μονογενῆ ὀνόματι Βαρβάραν,  
ἐποίησεν δὲ αὐτῇ ὑψηλὸν πύργον κάκει  
κατέκλεισεν αὐτήν, ὥστε μὴ ὁράσθαι  
αὐτήν ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, διὰ τὸ  
ὑπερβάλλον τοῦ κάλλους αὐτῆς.  
*(PBarb. 1-6)*

Κατ' ἐκείνου δὴ οὖν καιροῦ Μαξιμιανοῦ τοῦ ἀσεβοῦς  
βασιλεύοντος, ἡγεμονεύοντος δὲ Μαρκιανοῦ  
ἦν τις τοπάρχης, φησὶν, ὀνόματι Διόσκορος,  
πλούσιος σφόδρα, ἑμμανῆς δὲ περὶ τῶν ἀνύχων  
εἰδώλων προσκύνῃσιν. Οὗτος μονογενὲς ἔσχε  
θυγάτριον, Βαρβάραν ὀνόματι, κάλλους ὡραιότητι  
διαπρέπουσαν καὶ τρόπου σεμνότητι διαλάμπου-  
σαν. Πύργον οὖν ὑψηλὸν δειμάμενος ἐκείσε τὴν  
παρθένον κατέκλεισεν, ὥστε μὴ ὁρᾶσθαι αὐτὴν ὑπὸ  
τῶν ἀνθρώπων διὰ τὴν ἐπανθοῦσαν καὶ ἀπαστρά-  
πτουσαν τοῦ κάλλους φανότητα καὶ λαμπρότητα.  
*(Barb. 7.1-8)*

More examples could be cited to illustrate the close connection between the homily and the source.<sup>14</sup> This is generally the trend throughout the passion narrative. The two texts, however, are rarely identical. John's encomium is written in an ornate, highly classicising style with unusual vocabulary, and is often embellished with rhetorical devices, such as antithesis and comparison. A nice example of the latter is found in the triple contrast between the martyrs who are driven by their love for God, and the enemies of Christ who are stirred by satanic zeal:

Ἀλλὰ τί θαυμάζομεν, ἀδελφοί, τοὺς τῇ πλάνῃ τῆς ἀσεβείας μεθύοντας καὶ τῇ τοῦ Σατανᾶ μανίᾳ ἐκβεβακχευμένους; Ὡς περ γὰρ οἱ καλλίνικοι μάρτυρες τῷ περὶ Χριστὸν φίλτρῳ τῷ θείῳ γενόμενοι κάτοχοι πνεύματι τὴν φύσιν νικήσαντες καὶ ὑπερναβάντες ἐν τοῖς ὑπὲρ φύσιν γεγόνασιν, οὕτω δὲ καὶ οἱ τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ τούτων διώκται τοῦ πονηροῦ πλήρεις χρηματίζοντες πνεύματος καὶ τῇ ἀποστατικῇ ἑαυτοὺς δυνάμει καταδουλώσαντες ἔξω καὶ αὐτοὶ τῆς φύσεως οὐκ εἰς κρεῖττον, ἀλλ' εἰς τὸ χεῖρον ἀπώλισθον καὶ ἐξέπεσον. Καὶ ὥς περ ἐκεῖνοι ἄνω τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης ὑπερυψώθησαν καταστάσεως, τοσοῦτον καὶ οὗτοι κατωτέρω ταύτης κατεκλύσθησαν καὶ τοῖς ἀνθρωποκτόνοις γεγόνασιν δαίμοσιν ὅμοιοι· καὶ μάλα εἰκότως. Οἱ γὰρ Χριστῷ προσερχόμενοι Χριστοῦ μιμηταὶ διὰ τῆς αὐτῆς ἀρετῆς

<sup>14</sup> For example, Barbara's attack on the idols on her way to the tower, and the profession of her faith before her father Dioscorus: *Barb.* 8.18-23/*PBarb.* 39-48; *Barb.* 9.4-9/*PBarb.* 52-8.



καθίστανται, οἱ δὲ τῷ τοῦ διαβόλου ζυγῷ ἑαυτοὺς ὑποζεύξαντες, ἐκείνῳ δῆπουθεν γίνονται παρεμφερεῖς καὶ ἐφάμιλλοι.<sup>15</sup>

But why marvel, brothers, at those who are intoxicated with the folly of impiety and are inspired with the bacchic frenzy of Satan? For just as the triumphant martyrs received the Spirit through their divine love for Christ, and having conquered and surpassed nature, were above nature, so were Christ and the martyrs' persecutors filled with the spirit of evil, and enslaved themselves to the apostate power, and so also slipped away from nature and fell from it, not for better but for worse. And just as the first were elevated above the human condition, so much more were the latter washed away beneath it, becoming equal to the man-slaying demons; and reasonably so. For those who come to Christ become Christ's imitators through their virtue, but those who put themselves under the yoke of the Devil become, no doubt, like him and are his equals.

The homily also reveals a rich and spontaneous eloquence with the use of anaphora, which is mostly characteristic of the concluding encomiastic parts of the homily:

Ἄπιθι τοίνυν, σεμνὴ καλλιπαρθένε τῶν ὑπερκοσμίων γερῶν ἀπολαύουσα. Ἄπιθι, ἔνθα λόγος σιγᾷ τῶν ὑπὲρ λόγον τὴν δόξαν διεξοδικῶς εἰπεῖν οὐ δυνάμενος. Ἄπιθι τῶν ὑπὲρ ἐνθύμησιν ἀγαθῶν ἡδονῆς τῆς ἀκράτου μεθέξουσα, ἔνθα νόησις ἅπασα ἐκ τῶν μερικῶν φαντασμάτων τὴν γνῶσιν ἀθροίζουσα ἄργεϊ καὶ σχολάζει ἀπλῶς τοῦ νοῦ αἰωνίως τοῖς ὑπερφυέσι καὶ νοητοῖς ἐπιβάλλοντος. Ἄπιθι, ἔνθα τῶν αἰσθητῶν καὶ αἰσθήσεων ἡ πολυσχιδὴς ἀπάτη καὶ περιφορὰ πέπαιται τε καὶ κατήργηται.

Depart, then, revered and fair maiden, and enjoy the rewards which are beyond this world. Depart to where words fall silent, being unable to describe in detail the glory of what is beyond words. Depart, and partake of the hallowed pleasure of goods beyond perception, in a place where reason gathers knowledge from partial visions, for it stays idle and is at leisure, while the mind adds them to what is supernatural and imperceptible as a single thing. Depart, to where the multifarious deceit and error of our senses and the perceptible things stops and is abolished.<sup>16</sup>

Similar stylistic features which increase the homily's rhythmical vividness include the homoioteleuton<sup>17</sup> and the frequent apostrophes to the congregation.<sup>18</sup>

Occasionally, interventions are not related only to style but also content. Overall, two main types of interventions can be discerned: the first, concerns certain scenes and episodes found in the original *passion*, while the second the treatment of certain characters. One of the

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<sup>15</sup> *Barb.* 15.11-24.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.* 22.9-16. Also 22.17-29.

<sup>17</sup> E.g. *ibid.* 4.1-13.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.* 3.19; 15.11; 16.9.

first things that the *Passio Barbarae* tells us is that Barbara's father 'made a high tower for her and shut her up in it, so that she might not be seen by men because of the exceeding fairness of her beauty.'<sup>19</sup> When some noblemen asked Dioscorus for permission to marry his daughter, he presented her with the option of marriage. Barbara, however, rejected the proposal and remained in her place of confinement.<sup>20</sup> We are left to believe that Barbara spent her whole time in the tower. Her only appearance outside of it is when her father departs for a journey, at which point she visits the bathhouse he had commissioned and orders the construction of three windows in imitation of the Trinity. As it stands, the tower motif does not seem to be relevant to the plot or contribute to it. There is a clear connection between Barbara's beauty, her enclosure, and a potential marriage arrangement with the mediation of Dioscorus. But none of these is related to her martyrdom. Even when the saint refuses to marry, without providing any obvious explanation, Dioscorus does not seem disturbed by her decision nor does he try to convince her of the opposite.<sup>21</sup> The reason for Dioscorus' indignation is rather the construction of the three windows that symbolise the Holy Trinity. Thus, the tower theme and the events that surround it appear cut off from the rest of the narrative.

John attempted to make the episode more consistent with the rest of the narrative by adding a few lines that glue together the first scenes of the passion with what follows, and fill any gaps in comprehension. In his version, the tower acquires a prominent significance and is transformed into the setting of Barbara's conversion to Christianity. Isolated from the tumult of the world, Barbara contemplated the blessings of a life in Christ and the vanity of earthly goods, and while for Dioscorus the tower provided her protection from the eyes of the people,

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<sup>19</sup> *PBarb.* 4-6.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.* 6-10.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.* 10.

for her it warded off external temptation and the deceit of idols.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, what was previously only implied in the *passion*, namely that Barbara's rejection of marriage was due to her love for Christ, is now explicitly articulated by John:

Γελοῖον γὰρ καὶ πάσης ἀτοπίας ἀνάμεστον ἡ παρθένος ἡγήσατο, καθάπαξ ἑαυτὴν τῷ οὐρανίῳ καὶ ἀθανάτῳ νυμφίῳ ἀναθεῖσά τε καὶ συνάψασα, εἰ τοῖς σκωλήκων δίκην ἰλυώδεσι τέλμασιν ἰλυσπωμένων ἐλληνικῷ βορβόρῳ ὑπεῖξειεν.

For, having devoted herself to the heavenly and immortal Bridegroom, the virgin thought it was ludicrous and completely absurd to yield to those who like worms in marshy swamps were covered in heathen mud.<sup>23</sup>

Another episode that appears in the old *passion* after Barbara's instructions to the builders of the bathhouse does not receive the same treatment in John's encomium, but is omitted altogether.<sup>24</sup> Barbara is described there as entering the cistern of the bathhouse and on her way out engraving the sign of the cross on the eastern wall with her finger. She enters again into a kind of niche from which holy water flows to the author's day and where the trace of her foot is preserved. The bathhouse is then compared to the river Jordan, the pools of Siloam and Bethesda, and the well of the Samaritan. As it is, the meaning of the episode is rather obscure. Another variant of Barbara's account is more revealing. The scene constitutes a ritual in which Barbara baptises herself:

And after she had prayed these things, she let herself into the water saying: 'Barbara is baptised in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.'<sup>25</sup>

It is possible that during the process of transmission, the story was gradually simplified, until it ultimately became unintelligible.<sup>26</sup> This could explain why the episode is removed from John's homily, despite its importance for the development of the character of St

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<sup>22</sup> *Barb.* 7.9-20.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.* 8.9-12.

<sup>24</sup> *PBarb.* 25-38.

<sup>25</sup> Wirth 1892: 106, fn. 6.

<sup>26</sup> A suggestion made in Eberhart 1988: 23.

Barbara. For it is important to note that in the original *passion*, it was this scene of (self-)baptism that encapsulated Barbara's virtuous life and formal devotion to Christianity. This was replaced in John's homily by the idea of her isolation in the tower and her conversion in an environment of contemplation and spiritual formation.<sup>27</sup>

A few more changes in relation to the original text can be detected in the absence of minor characters, such as the shepherds who betrayed Barbara's hiding place to her outraged father after her miraculous disappearance into an underground hole, and a certain Gerontius who was guarding the house in which Dioscorus imprisoned the martyr before her trial by the governor Marcianus.<sup>28</sup> These might have been regarded by John as graphic details which could be suppressed without any impact on the narrative: their removal would have made the story more concise and easier to assimilate.

### *The Encomium of St John Chrysostom*

We first learn about the life of St John Chrysostom in a funerary speech written very shortly after his death in exile on 14 September 407. Attributed for a long time to a certain Martyrius, often identified with Martyrius of Antioch, the speech has recently been argued to belong to Cosmas, a contemporary of John, who seems to have been a deacon of the Church of the Apostles in Constantinople.<sup>29</sup> By far the best source of historical information about John Chrysostom is Palladius' (d. 420-430) *Dialogus de vita Ioannis Chrysostomi*, which also

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<sup>27</sup> Another possibility is that John intended to eliminate any allusions to the concept of self-baptism. The act of baptising oneself appears in one of the hallmarks of the hagiographic literature, the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, in which the martyr Thecla throws herself into a pond and performs on herself the ritual of baptism. Tertullian had already expressed his objections by questioning the authenticity of the text. Cf. Conor 2004: 7; Johnson 2006: 3 and 6. Perhaps John omits the episode from Barbara's encomium to avoid mentioning a practice that either sounded unusual or was condemnable.

<sup>28</sup> *PBarb.* 61-67; *ibid.* 73-74.

<sup>29</sup> A summary of contemporary and later sources concerning the life John Chrysostom can be found in Barnes and Bevan 2013: 5-12. The list of writers that follows is also based on the same study.

contains unique details about the saint's early years in Antioch. Many events surrounding his life found their way into the *Ecclesiastical Histories* of his near-contemporaries Philostorgius, Socrates Scholasticus, and Sozomen. George of Alexandria's *Life of St John Chrysostom* stands out among the numerous later *vitae* for being the first complete hagiographic portrayal of the saint, which would have a great influence on subsequent hagiographers and on the *Life* that was included in the *Menologion* of Symeon Metaphrastes. Chrysostom's life and deeds became the subject of many encomia in his honour among which are a now lost encomium by Proclus of Constantinople (d. 446) and a series of encomia by Theodoret, fragments of which were preserved by Photius. John of Damascus' panegyric is the earliest encomium we possess that survives in its entirety. More encomia were subsequently written by Cosmas Vestitor, Leo VI, and Niketas David Paphlagon.

John borrowed biographical material about John Chrysostom from Palladius, a close associate and fervent supporter of the saint, who composed an account of the imperial and ecclesiastical intrigues that led to his deposition from the episcopal throne of Constantinople and his subsequent death in exile. There is a passage from Palladius' *Dialogue* (not included in Kotter's critical apparatus) which has been incorporated almost word for word into the encomium and provides essential biographical information about John Chrysostom.<sup>30</sup> The part, for example, concerning his retreat to the desert in the years before his ordination as a presbyter, reads as follows:

[...] καταλαμβάνει τὰ πλησίον ὄρη·  
καὶ περιτυχὼν γέροντι Σύρῳ,  
ἐγκράτειαν τημελοῦντι,  
ἀπομιμῆται τὴν σκληραγωγίαν,  
χρονίσας παρ' αὐτῷ δις δύο ἔτη,  
ἀπομαχώμενος ταῖς τῆς ἡδυπαθείας σπιλάσιν.  
Ὡς δὲ ῥᾶον περιεγένετο τούτων,

Καὶ τοῖς πέλας προσομιλήσας ὄρεσιν  
ὁδηγεῖται πρὸς τινὰ πρεσβύτιν, Σύρον  
μὲν τὴν διάλεκτον, τὴν δὲ γνώσιν οὐκ ἰδιώτην,  
ἄκραν φιλοσοφοῦντα ἐγκράτειαν,  
καὶ τούτου τὴν σκληραγωγίαν  
τέτρασιν ἀπομαζάμενος ἔτεσιν  
καὶ πάσης ἡδυπαθείας  
ῥᾶον περιγενόμενος,

<sup>30</sup> *Chrys.* 8.1-17.

οὐ πόνω τοσοῦτον, ὅσον λόγω,  
ἀναχωρεῖ ἐν σπηλαίῳ μόνος,  
γλιγόμενος ἀδηλίας  
(Palladius, *Dialogus* PG 47.18)

λόγον ἔχων τὸν πόνον συναμιλλώμενον,  
τῆς ἀδηλίας γλιγόμενος  
ἐσχατιᾷς τιнос ἐγένετο πάροικος,  
ἄντρον αὐχῶν καταγώγιον  
ὡς ἀρετῆς παλαίστραν καὶ κονιστήριον.  
(Chrys. 8.17-23)

But while references to important moments in the saint's life are the axis around which the encomium is organised, these are limited and often obscure, so that the Damascene's treatment of John Chrysostom bears little resemblance to the long and diverse text of Palladius. That the reason for this differentiation should not be sought in the encomiastic character of the sermon but in the homilist's strategy of representation is confirmed by another encomium, written about a century later by emperor Leo VI, in which John Chrysostom's life is narrated in much detail.<sup>31</sup> Contrary to Leo, in the *Encomium of St John Chrysostom* John Damascene dispenses with the narrative parts, seeking to provide a rhetorical exaltation of John Chrysostom's moral qualities which consists of long lists of generic virtues. The encomium is unique among John's hagiographic homilies in that it does not place emphasis on the events of the saint's life, and in that it makes very limited use of primary hagiographical sources.

It is not, of course, for the lack of available accounts that John ignores the historical aspects of Chrysostom's life, since he does use the narrative of Palladius. Nor is it likely that the preaching circumstances, namely the possibility of having only a limited period of time for the delivery of the homily, made the omission of a life narrative necessary. The encomium is indeed the shortest of the three in length, yet the encomiastic parts are fairly extensive, so that they could easily have been replaced by a more traditional type of narrative. Everything points, therefore, to the fact that the content of the homily was intentionally focused on Chrysostom's moral and religious virtues, acquiring a particularly didactic

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<sup>31</sup> For the composition of the encomium Leo relied on the *vita* of St John Chrysostom written by George of Alexandria; Antonopoulou 1997: 123-6.

character. The encomium provides the first clear hint of how the type of balance John strikes between the source material he borrows and his own words determines the way in which his homilies transmit their message. As we have seen, in the *Encomium of St Barbara* the saint is converted into an exemplar of virtue through a combination of the preacher's treatment of the original hagiographic account and his own comments and interventions. Chrysostom, by contrast, becomes a model for imitation through the homily's rhetorical force, which shifts the attention from the events of the saint's life to the admirable traits of his character, as they are eloquently being described by the preacher. We will at once see that the *Passion of St Artemius* derives much of its edifying potential from the manner in which the portrait of St Artemius is created through an extremely skilful and intricate combination of primary sources which aim to produce a potent reconstruction of his life and ordeal.

### *The Passion of St Artemius*

According to the hagiographic tradition surrounding St Artemius, the reign of the emperor Julian saw the reopening of pagan temples and the restoration of idols. On his journeys, Julian provoked the suffering of Christians. During his visit to Antioch, he ordered the gruesome punishment of Eugenius and Macarius, two presbyters who had been denounced to him. When Artemius, the dux of Alexandria who had now been assigned to Syria, witnessed the tortures to which the two Christians were subjected, he presented himself to Julian and rebuked him for his wrongdoings. Incensed at the offence, Julian deprived him of his rank and inflicted numerous tortures on him, eventually ordering his decapitation. A deaconess called Ariste requested Artemius' body and transferred it to Constantinople, to a place that had been prepared to house the relics of the martyr.

This is the basic outline of Artemius' martyrdom as narrated in the anonymous premetaphrastic *passion*.<sup>32</sup> There is no doubt that behind the hagiographic reworking of Artemius' life stands the historical figure of Flavius Artemius, *dux Aegypti*, as is testified by a papyrus record from the year 360 AD.<sup>33</sup> Several other sources allow us a glimpse of Artemius' activities during his military career in Egypt. We know that he was personally in charge of the search for the exiled Athanasius, who was the Nicene bishop of Alexandria, and that to this end, he conducted rigorous and occasionally violent investigations.<sup>34</sup> In the Greek *Vita Pachomii*, his attempt to arrest Athanasius on the authority of the emperor Constantius, who allegedly acted under the influence of Arian circles, encourages his characterisation as Arian.<sup>35</sup> The fourth-century historian Ammianus also implies Artemius' connection with the Arian bishop George of Cappadocia, who had taken Athanasius' place on the Alexandrian throne. According to this account, when the Alexandrians learned of Artemius' execution on account of the crimes he had committed against them, and feeling safe that they were no longer threatened by his promises for revenge, they were free to direct their anger against George for his cruelty.<sup>36</sup> Although Ammianus' testimony has convincingly been reinterpreted as anti-Christian rhetoric, it is not unlikely that Artemius had Arian tendencies.<sup>37</sup> However, neither his religious convictions nor his controversial actions as a military governor seem to have posed any barrier to the rising popularity of his cult. His inclusion in the circle of martyrs who suffered death under Julian was probably a strong incentive for this transition, for which the oldest evidence comes from the *Ecclesiastical History* of Theodoret, a little less

<sup>32</sup> *Passio Artemii* (BHG 169y-z). The text is edited in Bidez 1913: 166-75 (reprinted in Bidez 1981: 166-75). F. Winkelman supports a sixth-century date as a *terminus post quem* for the composition of the *passion* on the basis of the translation of Artemius' relics to Constantinople in the early sixth century; see Bidez 1981: 357. For more on the text, *ibid.* xlv-li, 356-61.

<sup>33</sup> *POxy.* 1103. Cf. Lieu 1996: 68-9; Lieu and Montserrat 1996: 214-5. For discussions of Artemius' biography, see Dummer 1971; Lieu 1996; Lieu and Montserrat 1996: 68-76; Woods 1999; Teitler 2017: 41-8.

<sup>34</sup> See Athanasius, *Festal Letter Index* 32 (ed. Martin and Albert 1985: 224-77; Syriac text with French translation); *Vita prima graeca Pachomii* 137-8 (BHG 1396) (ed. Halkin 1932: 1-96).

<sup>35</sup> See previous footnote.

<sup>36</sup> Ammianus, *Res Gestae* XXII.11.1-3.

<sup>37</sup> On Ammianus' manipulation of the facts, see Woods 1999.



than a hundred years after Artemius' death in 362 AD.<sup>38</sup> By the early seventh century, the resting place of Artemius' relics in the Church of St John the Forerunner in Constantinople was associated with the performance of healing miracles, many of which were compiled in written collections of which the most important is the *Miracula Artemii*, a collection of forty-five miracle stories composed between 658-668.<sup>39</sup>

The *Passion of St Artemius* is a revised and extended version by John of Damascus of the hagiographic story of St Artemius. In contrast to both previous homilies, the text answers generously underlying questions of literary dependence early on in the introduction. John prefaces his narrative with a request: his endeavour should not be subject to unfavourable criticism before one examines the original account of the saint's martyrdom.<sup>40</sup> The author of that text, John continues, wrote in times of upheaval and distress, and so recorded the events to the best of his abilities, not attending to elegant wording but truth alone.<sup>41</sup> The homilist also believes the text to have been composed originally in the time of Julian, soon after Artemius' death. That was a period of extreme uncertainty for Christians in which Julian even forbade that there should be either 'a written account or any other kind of record' for those who died for their faith.<sup>42</sup> Defying this edict was a risky venture to which John attributes the unadorned style of the text about Artemius that he had available. He admits that he is no more capable of narrating the martyr's story, but it would be unthinkable to let his deeds be forgotten, lying written in a few words.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Lieu and Montserrat 1996: 222-3.

<sup>39</sup> For the healing cult of St Artemius in Constantinople, see Lieu 1996: 56-60 with further bibliography, and for more details Crisafulli and Nesbitt 1997: 19-30. For the architecture of the Church of St John the Forerunner: Crisafulli and Nesbitt 1997: 8-19. The *Miracula Artemii* (BHG 173) is edited in Papadopoulos-Kerameus 1909: 1-75. For the date of the text, see Crisafulli and Nesbitt 1997: 7.

<sup>40</sup> *Artem.* 1.10-1. John refers to it by the word 'ὑπόμνημα'. Hagiographers often mentioned in the prologues of their works the efforts of previous writers that had undertaken to collect the deeds of the saints whose lives they were about to relate; see Pratsch 2005: 45-7.

<sup>41</sup> *Artem.* 1.12-7.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.* 2.3-9.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.* 2.1; 3.9-10.

We thus learn from John's own lips that he had access to a written account of Artemius' martyrdom. John reports that he also found numerous scattered references to the martyr amidst the writings of those who documented the acts of emperors and recorded the history of the church. He then lists the names of several historians of the fourth and fifth centuries: 'Eusebius, called 'of Pamphilus', Socrates, of the heresy of Novatus, and Philostorgius, who also was of the heresy of Eunomius, as well as Theodoretus, and many others.'<sup>44</sup> Of these, Eusebius and Philostorgius receive special note. According to John, Eusebius portrays Artemius as a member of the senate and a genuine friend of Constantine's son Constantius.<sup>45</sup> Paradoxically, no reference to Artemius is to be found in Eusebius' surviving oeuvre.<sup>46</sup> The attempts to turn Artemius into a central figure in the events surrounding Constantine have been interpreted as 'pious attributions'.<sup>47</sup> It can also be argued that for John, the importance of such an account seems to lie in Eusebius' reputation as 'the most learned' (λογιώτατος) among the bishops in the time of Constantine.<sup>48</sup> Eusebius' place in the history of church historical writing and biblical scholarship would provide credibility to the account and enhance the saint's stature.<sup>49</sup> The citing of the names of Socrates Scholasticus and Theodoret of Cyrus also probably served to strengthen the authenticity of the story. Like Eusebius, Socrates has nothing to say about Artemius; at least, he does not refer to him by name, since it is possible that a reference to 'the general of Egypt' in a letter written by Julian and quoted by Socrates was understood by John to refer to Artemius.<sup>50</sup> Theodoret does mention the

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<sup>44</sup> *ibid.* 4.2-4.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.* 4.5-12.

<sup>46</sup> Lieu and Montserrat 1996: 256 fn. 7. However, the claim about Artemius' political status and his relationship with Constantius is not necessarily unfounded, especially in light of Constantius' appointment of Artemius to Egypt (cf. *Artem.* 18.2-4); see Woods 1999: 19-20 and Amidon 2007: 167 fn. 5. It is possible that John made an assumption that appeared historically justified.

<sup>47</sup> See Lieu 1996: 65.

<sup>48</sup> *Artem.* 4.6.

<sup>49</sup> Byzantine reception of Eusebius, however, was generally mixed. He was recognised for his erudition but his doctrinal position was regarded as questionable; see Schott 2013: 351-70.

<sup>50</sup> Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica* III.3.10.

execution of Artemius on account of his destruction of pagan idols but his testimony takes up only a few lines.<sup>51</sup>

Socrates, Theodoret, and Eusebius contribute very little, if anything, to the knowledge of the details surrounding Artemius' martyrdom. But they stand as symbolic historical witnesses to his deeds. John's concern is not so much accuracy and reliability as is the emphasis on the recognition of the martyr's shining exemplarity by men of the pen. John was not unfamiliar with the work of the three historians. Excerpts from the *Histories* of Socrates and Theodoret, and Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* and the *Vita Constantini* were used by him to defend the veneration of icons.<sup>52</sup> Now they were put to use as instruments for reassuring the extent of the saint's grandeur and reputation. Yet it is Philostorgius who is credited with the most comprehensive narrative of Artemius. John acknowledges that, despite being a supporter of Eunomius, Philostorgius is most fervent in his praise of the martyr, providing information about his achievements and noble descent.<sup>53</sup> Precisely how far Philostorgius mentions Artemius is difficult to know, since his work survives only in a ninth-century summary by Photius.<sup>54</sup> Even so, his *Historia Ecclesiastica* is demonstrably the basis for a large proportion of the content of the *Passion of St Artemius*.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, it is employed by John not so much for its factual content regarding the events of Artemius' life as for complementing the portrait of the saint with contextual information of historical interest. The pattern, then, of John's use of these records remains the same. His aim is not to produce an accurate historical record of Artemius' life and martyrdom, but to create a narrative with more or less extensive

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<sup>51</sup> Theodoret, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 197.3-8.

<sup>52</sup> See Kotter 1975: 28-30 for a list of John's sources for the *Against the Iconoclasts*.

<sup>53</sup> *Artem.* 4.12-6.

<sup>54</sup> On Photius' epitome of Philostorgius, see Bidez 1981: xii-xliv. Bidez edited the epitome as part of Philostorgius' reconstructed text. Artemius' name does not figure in Photius' summary; cf. Lieu and Montserrat 1996: 256 fn. 4 and Amidon 2007: 165 fn. 1.

<sup>55</sup> As our second major source for Philostorgius' lost *Historia Ecclesiastica* after Photius, parts of the *Passion of St Artemius* were also edited by Bidez. In Bidez's text, which juxtaposes Photius' summary with the relevant parts from the *Passion of St Artemius*, one can clearly observe the extent of John's direct borrowings from Philostorgius.

borrowings from reliable sources that looks authentic enough to be able to provoke his audience's admiration for the martyr's memorable acts.

The prologue of the homily acquires special significance, since none of John's sermons contains a comparable programmatic delineation of his method of assembling his sources and expounding on his subject. However, the textual intricacy of the *Passion of St Artemius* is not fully encapsulated by John's introductory remarks. More intriguing is the widespread presence of references to pagan writers and philosophers. Julian begins the interrogation of the Antiochene presbyters with an ostentatious display of his Hellenic erudition. He first addresses Eugenius, whom he believes to be 'uneducated' (ἀπαίδευτον), and informs him that if he boasts that Christ was born twice, he should know that there were men among the Greeks who were born three times, the so-called Hermes Trismegistus and Pythagoras.<sup>56</sup> Eugenius scornfully replies that the birth of Christ at which Julian jeered was also announced in pagan oracles and in the Sibylline books, and quotes Hermes, who dedicated his teachings to his eldest son Tat and to Asclepius of Epidauros, in one of his allusions to the nature of the Christian God.<sup>57</sup> He also criticises Pythagoras for the pointlessness of the three lives he supposedly lived, spent in absurd deeds and practices, and condemns him and Hermes for their belief in the transmigration of the souls and in reincarnation.<sup>58</sup> After an exchange between Julian and the second prisoner Macarius in which the emperor claims knowledge of Hermes, Orpheus, and Plato's theology, it is Artemius' turn to remind the Apostate that the coming of Christ had been prophesied in the Sibylline oracles and in the poetry of Virgil which is called Bucolic, as well as by Apollo himself whose oracle Artemius goes on to recite.<sup>59</sup> To Julian's ironic comment that Artemius must be some kind of diviner rather than the general of Egypt, the martyr replies that he simply aims to demonstrate the truth through

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<sup>56</sup> *Artem.* 26.8-18.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.* 27.12; 28.7-24.

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.* 29.1-17; 30.4-8.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.* 34.6-7; 46.1-17.

what is more familiar to Julian, and refers further to Anaxagoras, Archelaus, Pericles, and Socrates, namely the precursors of Plato's school of thought of which Julian was an exponent.<sup>60</sup> Artemius ends his apology reassuring Julian that he will not denounce his Christian faith with a quote from Euripides' *Bacchae*.<sup>61</sup>

The immediate question that arises is whether John borrowed directly from pagan authors or from intermediary sources. It would certainly be odd if John used such a disparate range of sources as Plutarch, Diogenes Laertius, or Iamblichus, only to write, for instance, a few lines about the tales associated with Pythagoras.<sup>62</sup> By contrast, John's knowledge is more likely to have come indirectly from Christian texts or compendia. In particular, Cyril of Alexandria's *Contra Iulianum*, which Cyril composed in the fifth century as a response to Julian's treatise *Contra Galileos*, appears to have been an influential model for the *Passion of St Artemius*.<sup>63</sup> Apart from constituting a refutation of Julian's arguments against Christianity, and therefore simulating a confrontation with the emperor much in the spirit of Artemius and the two presbyters' defiance of Julian, Cyril's work was a rich source of ideas about pagan religious culture, including, notably, Hermes Trismegistus among other prominent pagan thinkers, thanks to his first-hand knowledge of the classics.<sup>64</sup> Cyril himself included several Hermetic quotations in the *Contra Iulianum*.<sup>65</sup> It is worth emphasising in this respect that he probably did not have access to a corpus of Hermetic texts but derived those quotations from indirect

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<sup>60</sup> *ibid.* 47.1-25.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid.* 47.30.

<sup>62</sup> See as an example *Artem.* 29 and the sources cited there by Kotter. Clearly, Kotter's critical apparatus (largely based on Bidez) is simply intended to provide the reader with parallels in profane literature. Doubts about the extent of the text's actual reliance on pagan writers are also raised by Bidez 1981: li.

<sup>63</sup> Cyril of Alexandria's *Contra Iulianum* has been newly edited in Riedweg 2016 (Books 1-5), and Kinzig and Brüggemann 2017 (Books 6-10). For a study of the text and its arguments, see Malley 1978.

<sup>64</sup> Young 2010: 320: 'The work against Julian has been regarded as the major evidence of Cyril's classical learning; elsewhere he appears a thoroughly ecclesiastical figure, and without this work of apology, his education in the traditional *paideia* appeared open to question, especially in view of his lack of a polished rhetorical style. Then R. M. Grant showed that Cyril's knowledge of pagan literature does come from independent researches, undertaken for the purpose of refuting Julian, but often by following up references in Eusebius' *Preparatio Evangelica* and the works of other Christian predecessors.'

<sup>65</sup> E.g. Cyril, *Contra Iulianum* 1.43.14-44.11; 1.46.9-34.

sources.<sup>66</sup> The importance of this is that it provides further evidence for the unlikely existence of Hermetic collections to which John might have had access centuries later. As a matter of fact, it is thought that Jacob of Edessa, an earlier contemporary of John, also introduced references to Hermes Trismegistus into his *Hexaemeron* from an intermediary, which is also believed to be Cyril's *Contra Iulianum*.<sup>67</sup> There are therefore indications for an interest in Cyril's polemic as a potential source on pagan religious views in this period.<sup>68</sup> In the case of the *Passion of St Artemius*, his treatise provided furthermore the example of an apology against Julian from which elements of anti-pagan rhetoric could be borrowed. Besides, John repeatedly quoted passages from Cyril's works in his own treatises, which confirms the use of his writings.<sup>69</sup>

Even so, John does not directly quote Cyril. There is one apparent exception of a Hermetic quotation in the *Passion of St Artemius*, whose first line coincides with that of the same quotation in the *Contra Iulianum*, but then their content diverges.<sup>70</sup> This points to the possibility that John was using more than one sources for the reconstruction of the image of profane theology. Apollo's oracle, which Artemius cites as evidence among the pagans for the coming of Christ, does not exist in Cyril's text, but has, nevertheless, survived in the *Theosophy*, a collection of oracles and sayings attributed to Greek philosophers which was added as an appendix to a now lost work in seven books entitled *On the Right Faith* (late fifth/early sixth century).<sup>71</sup> Similarly, no mention of Socrates as a student of Archelaus, and of Archelaus and Pericles as students of Anaxagoras, is made in the *Contra Iulianum*. This

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<sup>66</sup> For this view, see van Loon 2009: 63.

<sup>67</sup> Van Bladel 2009: 13.

<sup>68</sup> This is not surprising considering the renewed intellectual curiosity for pagan theology in the eighth-century Middle East, remarkably exemplified, for example, by the Arab reception of the Hermetic literature, on which see van Bladel 2009.

<sup>69</sup> E.g. *Trisag.* 12-16; *Imag.* III.61-63.

<sup>70</sup> Compare *Artem.* 28.13-6 with Cyril, *Contra Iulianum* 1.43.16 ff.

<sup>71</sup> See *Artem.* 46.9-17 found in *Theosophia* 1.54-64 (ed. Beatrice 2001: 3-134); cf. also comment by Beatrice 2001: xxiv. For a more detailed discussion of the *Theosophia*, see the introduction in Beatrice 2001: i-lxvii.

genealogy of philosophers and sages appears, however, in two authors consulted by John, Eusebius and Theodoret, although not in their historical works.<sup>72</sup>

In a slightly different case, Pythagoras, who receives the scorn of Eugenius, is indeed the subject of extensive treatment by Cyril.<sup>73</sup> Yet John does not borrow from him the biographical anecdotes about Pythagoras' golden thigh, his recognition of a friend's voice in the bellow of a bull, his obsession with the symbolic meaning of the *tetraktys*, or his reverence for beans.<sup>74</sup> In the chapter on the Pythagorean school in his *On Heresies*, John cites certain teachings attributed to Pythagoras, such as the prohibition of sacrifices, the abstinence from eating animals, the transmigration of souls, the keeping of silence for five years, and his self-declaration as god.<sup>75</sup> The passage, which in reality belongs to a content summary of Epiphanius of Salamis' *Panarion*,<sup>76</sup> does not have anything in common with the account of Pythagoras in the *Passion of St Artemius*. It proves, however, John's familiarity with some of the features of the tradition about Pythagoras, which could either be found encoded in Christian texts, such as the epitome of Epiphanius' *Panarion*, or in collections of sayings like the *Theosophy*, or could simply reflect common knowledge of Pythagorean dogmas.

So where does this leave us in terms of John's sources on pagan culture and of Cyril's *Contra Iulianum* as a work of reference? The *On Heresies* confirms John's access to texts on the Pythagoreans. But the fact that the Pythagorean references in the Artemius homily cannot be traced to any known text implies that he either used a source that is lost to us or recalled these characteristics from memory. On the other hand, the views about Hermes Trismegistus seem to have been based on Cyril's *Contra Iulianum*, but by no means does John copy or

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<sup>72</sup> Eusebius, *Preparatio evangelica* 10.14.13.1-14.1; Theodoret, *Graecarum affectionum curatio* 2.23.4.

<sup>73</sup> For instance, Cyril, *Contra Iulianum* 1.42.1-11; 2.14.12; 2.15.18.

<sup>74</sup> *Artem.* 29.1-17.

<sup>75</sup> *Haeres.* 5.

<sup>76</sup> For the anonymous *Anakephalaiosis*, a table of contents accompanied by a summary of every chapter from Epiphanius of Salamis' *Panarion*, a fourth-century treatise on early Christian heresies, and its relation to John's *On Heresies*, see Louth 2002: 56-60.

paraphrase parts of the treatise. It is probably more accurate to say that John drew inspiration from it. This could also explain why he does not reproduce any of Cyril's comments about Pythagoras. The reason may be that John did not intend to introduce Cyril's argumentation against Julian into his homily. Instead, his aim was to dress the debate between the martyrs and Julian with pagan colouring, and Cyril's *Contra Iulianum* served as a model for this purpose. He could then use some widely held views about Pythagoras to the effect of ridiculing his figure. This is why he also refers to Orpheus and Plato, both of whom are extensively discussed in the *Contra Iulianum*, yet no details are given about their views in the *Passion of St Artemius*. John simply adds their names as a means of recreating the context of a Christian-pagan debate. Again, the mention of Anaxagoras, Archelaus, Pericles, and Socrates was an improvised addition. It is not necessary that he consulted Eusebius or Theodoret. Besides, Pericles and Archelaus are described by Eusebius as 'acquaintances' of Anaxagoras, and not as students, as the homily states, while Theodoret makes no mention of Pericles at all.<sup>77</sup> It is, however, possible that John had available a collection of sayings like the *Theosophy* where he could have read the prophecies of Sibyl, and from which he could borrow texts like Apollo's oracle in order to further embellish his text. Perhaps it is from such a collection that he also borrowed the Hermetic quotation about the essence of God which must have seemed to him a more attractive alternative to the one quoted by Cyril.

The derivative nature of the *Passion of St Artemius* makes it very difficult to identify the interrelations of the texts that underlie it. However, it is clear that the homily aimed to improve upon the original martyrdom story much in the same way that the *Encomium of St Barbara* was a rhetorical enhancement of its model text. One important difference, however, is that in the case of the former we are dealing with a body of source texts of comparable significance for the production of the homily rather than with an extensively reworked core

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<sup>77</sup> See earlier fn. for references to the passages.



text. Instead of providing selected examples of rewriting as in the first section of this chapter, I will therefore focus on the specific contribution of each type of John's primary sources to the process of composition. These are generally three, and alternately occupy different positions of prominence in the text, although combinations are frequent.

The first one is the 'old' *passion* of St Artemius which John admits to have used in the introduction to the homily. The *passion* serves as a guide to the main events of Artemius' martyrdom and underlies those sections of the text which describe his appointment to the administration of Syria, his defence of the two Antiochean presbyters, and the tortures to which he was subjected until his execution.<sup>78</sup> Retaining many of the structural and thematic features of the old text was a practical way to build a solid basis for the further elaboration of the narrative. It also meant that even in its new form, the hagiographic account preserved its previous ideological projections. This was skilfully exploited by John, whose modifications are intended to reinforce or refocus the message of the source text. For example, Artemius' statement that just as God gave Job to the Devil, so Satan also asked for Julian in order to use him against Christians and recruit through him more workers for himself, is changed in John's text, in which Julian is said to have been handed to the Devil in order to 'winnow the wheat of Christ and sow the seed of weeds.'<sup>79</sup> Though slight, this modification alters the tone of the passage, emphasising the harm that can be caused by those who seek to undermine the Christian faith, and the readiness that Christians should display to separate themselves from them.<sup>80</sup> In another instance, John adds a prayer of gratitude which Artemius offers to God for being able to imitate the passion of Christ, thanks to whom the martyr also became 'a son of

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<sup>78</sup> Compare *Artem.* 35-39/*PArtem.* 167-169 and 171.11-5; *Artem.* 49-50/*PArtem.* 170-171.1-10; *Artem.* 59-67/*PArtem.* 172-175.

<sup>79</sup> *Artem.* 35.20; cf. *Lc* 22.31 and *Mt* 13.25.

<sup>80</sup> Interestingly, the same notion is expressed in John's treatise against the Nestorians, which he prefaces by saying that the 'seeder of weeds' attempted to confuse the people of God, turning them away from the correct faith, which is the reason why God has sent his illuminated pastors and teachers to lead the faithful: *Fid.* 1.6.

God' by grace.<sup>81</sup> The concept of sonship is recurrent in John's theology and highlights the soteriological dimension of the saint's suffering.<sup>82</sup> Rather than staying intact, the *passion* is given renewed momentum regarding its thematic potential, besides providing the main framework for the martyrdom narrative.

The sections describing Artemius' martyrdom are not entirely based on passages from the old *passion*, but are intertwined with material from the historiographical sources that John has consulted and specimens of pagan knowledge. The latter are fundamental components for the reconstruction of the dialogue that takes place between Julian and the presbyters Eugenius and Macarius during their trial.<sup>83</sup> The piece is entirely imaginary, since the source *passion* does not contain any exchange of words between the martyrs and the emperor, and is the first instance in the extant hagiographic homilies of John inventing from scratch an episode with no precedent in the original hagiographic account. What may have permitted such liberty is the nature of the encounter, one between Julian and two presbyters whom John describes as 'herdsmen of Christ's flock' and educated in Greek *paideia*. They were two figures with ecclesiastical authority and with the intellectual skill to refute the arguments of paganism, and the patristic literature did not lack parallels that simulated those circumstances. Cyril's *Contra Iulianum* offered a perfect model. In a way, John attributes the patristic authority and the theological acumen for polemical argumentation that the text reflects to Eugenius and Macarius' speech. The preacher feels free to recreate the debate between Julian and the martyrs, insofar as it imitates patristic invective against Julian. At the same time, John achieves to transform the *Passion of St Artemius* into a homily with clearly polemical overtones. If his interventions in the original hagiographic account were intended to reveal undetected dimensions of Artemius' story, the dramatisation of the martyrs' confrontation

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<sup>81</sup> *Artem.* 38.22.

<sup>82</sup> See also chapter 3.

<sup>83</sup> *Artem.* 25-34.

with Julian aims at developing more fully a particular dimension of it, namely, the intellectual and systematic defence of the Christian faith against its opponents.

For John of Damascus the contextualisation of the events narrated in the homily is of high priority. The historical account especially of Philostorgius, the third type of primary sources with an important role in the composition of the text, underlie whole sections of the homily, situating Artemius in relation to actual historical figures and events. John's borrowings serve various purposes and do not therefore form a single narrative but are interpolated into different parts of the homily according to the requirements of the plot. A considerable portion is devoted to Artemius' patron, Constantius, and his attempts to face the numerous pretenders to the throne, often with the obvious intention to justify his Arianising tendencies.<sup>84</sup> Equally long are the passages concerning Julian's atrocities in Antioch, which divide the narration of Artemius' martyrdom into two, thus increasing the tension and preparing the audience for the second and harsher phase of tortures which ends with the martyr's execution.<sup>85</sup> Smaller passages provide the material for Julian's accusations against the emperor Constantine which Artemius duly defends, and for the death of Julian in the Persian wars at the end of the homily.<sup>86</sup> The integration of history into the hagiographic account and the sense of completeness that it creates becomes itself a form of praise for the martyr whose achievements are now recounted with appropriate detail and depth. It also reflects an appreciation for the historical context as a mechanism for presenting the saints' acts as a result of and as a response to specific circumstances. Rather than being the abstract story of a martyr's triumph against paganism, the *Passion of St Artemius* is about recognisable individuals, such as Julian, who had a long-lasting impact in the consciousness of the Church and were embedded in its rhetoric, and describes the threats to Christianity with concrete

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<sup>84</sup> *Artem.* 7-15.

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.* 51-7.

<sup>86</sup> *ibid.* 41 and 43; 68-9.

features. Some of these threats, disguised in different forms, were still a reality in John's time. Equally, it contains concrete arguments for the defence of the faith, as seen from Eugenius and Macarius' answers to Julian, which although directed against paganism, generally show a determination to face the challenges posed to Christianity.

Finally, a brief note on the doubts that have occasionally been raised with regard to John of Damascus' authorship of the *Passion of St Artemius* is in order. The text was preserved among the genuine works of John of Damascus by its latest editor, Bonifatius Kotter. It already formed part of the Damascenean corpus in Migne's *Patrologia Graeca*, while Mai in his publication of the first edition had already made the connection between the text and John of Damascus.<sup>87</sup> The uncertainty regarding the text's authorship arose from a combination of two facts: the transmission of the text in part of the manuscripts simply under the name 'John the monk' (in five mss.) or 'John the monk and sinner' (in one ms.), and the existence of exemplars which bear the name 'John of Rhodes' (three mss.).<sup>88</sup> Kotter, who was also the first to publish a critical edition of John's *Dialectica*, remarked that the inscription 'John the monk' does not exclude the authorship of John of Damascus, since the majority of the manuscripts containing his *Dialectica* have been transmitted under the name 'John the monk' and not 'John of Damascus'.<sup>89</sup> Unfortunately, Kotter's observation has not been given the importance it deserves and is often taken lightly on account of the opinion expressed by two scholars who questioned the Damascenean authorship, both of them, however, long before Kotter's critical edition of the *Dialectica* and of the *Passion of St Artemius*. These are Battifol, in a article on the reconstruction of Philostorgius' history,<sup>90</sup> and Bidez, who created an edition of Philostorgius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* from fragments in other literary sources, including the *Passion of St Artemius*, parts of which he edited in his book.

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<sup>87</sup> Mai 1840: 340 fn. 2.

<sup>88</sup> Kotter 1988: 185.

<sup>89</sup> *ibid.* 186.

<sup>90</sup> Battifol 1889.

John's authorship was put in doubt by Battifol because of his discovery of a manuscript in which the *Passion of St Artemius* was attributed to a certain 'John of Rhodes'.<sup>91</sup> Battifol accepted John of Rhodes as the author of the text and put forward the hypothesis that he belonged to the school of the Studites because of the 'appearance and style' of the text, without, however, giving any more details.<sup>92</sup> Bidez also attributed the text to John of Rhodes based on the manuscript inscriptions ('as the title itself indicates').<sup>93</sup> Yet he did not make any suggestions regarding the literary milieu of this John of Rhodes or as to why John of Damascus' authorship is to be rejected. By contrast, Kotter's view, in agreement with F. Dölger whom he cites, is that the name 'John of Rhodes' probably found its way into the manuscript tradition by a redactor who appropriated the authorship of the work.<sup>94</sup> This would also explain why the name appears only in a small portion of the manuscripts.

The nature of composition of the Damascenean hagiographic homilies, and the study of the literary sources which supplied John with his information about Artemius and the historical circumstances of his time, allow us to establish further John's authorship. In particular, they are significant for refuting a series of arguments, which, curiously, place the composition of the *Passion of St Artemius* in a Constantinopolitan context.<sup>95</sup> S. Lieu's statement is very characteristic of this view: 'The subject of the AP [*Passion of St Artemius*] is so strongly linked with Constantinople that it is hard to conceive of the work being composed anywhere except in the imperial city.'<sup>96</sup> Confident though it sounds, this assertion is groundless on closer inspection. In trying to pinpoint what is concretely

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<sup>91</sup> *ibid.* 255-6: 'Hingegen habe ich im Cod. Parisinus 1510 die Vita des Artemius gefunden mit folgendem Titel: "Υπόμνημα ...παρὰ Ἰωάννου μοναχοῦ τοῦ Ῥοδίου". Daraus lässt sich mit Sicherheit folgern, dass der Verfasser Johannes monachus weder von Damascus noch von Sardes, sondern vielmehr von Rhodus ist.'

<sup>92</sup> *ibid.* 256: 'Wer dieser Johannes von Rhodus sein mag, aus der Darstellung und aus dem Stile zu schliessen scheint er der Schule des Studita angehört zu haben.'

<sup>93</sup> Bidez 1981: xliv: 'Wie der genaue Titel [...] angibt, ist dieser hagiographische Bericht von einem gewissen Johannes von Rhodus verfasst, einem Schriftstellernden Mönch, von dem wir sonst nichts wissen.'

<sup>94</sup> Kotter 1988: 185.

<sup>95</sup> Already implied by Battifol's reference to John of Rhodes as a Studite.

<sup>96</sup> Lieu 1996: 62-3.

‘Constantinopolitan’ about the text, we find little that deserves this characterisation. By far the lengthiest part of the account is concerned with Julian’s presence in Antioch which includes his encounters first with Eugenius and Macarius, and then with Artemius, as well as the episode with Babylas’ relics at Daphne. As for the sections that narrate the events after the death of Constantine and during the reign of Constantius, they do not reveal anything which points to Constantinople as the place for the text’s composition or to an authorial agenda served by somebody that had his focus on the capital. They are part of the historical context which John reconstructs for the martyrdom of St Artemius, quite like the final sections, which recount Julian’s death in the Persian wars and the ascension to the throne of Jovian and Valentinian.<sup>97</sup> If anything, the *Passion of St Artemius* is ‘Philostorgian’, since it reproduces the historical circumstances described in Philostorgius’ *Historia Ecclesiastica*, and has no obvious connections to the imperial city.

The only thing that could indicate a link between the text and Constantinople is the popularity of the saint’s healing cult in the capital. However, it is precisely the element which excludes Constantinople as the place for the composition of the text. One reason is that the text makes no mention of any healing miracles performed by the saint after his death. Before Artemius’ beheading, Christ appears in answer to the martyr’s prayers and grants him the ‘grace of healing’.<sup>98</sup> But this scene originates in the old *passion*.<sup>99</sup> It is unlikely that an author who wrote about Artemius in Constantinople would have made no reference to his miracles, when a few decades earlier another Constantinopolitan author had in fact compiled an entire collection of miracles stories attributed to the saint: the *Miracula Artemii*. The author of the *Passion of St Artemius* not only seems to ignore the existence of the *Miracula Artemii*, but also to be unaware of the huge popularity of the saint’s cult in Constantinople. That this is not

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<sup>97</sup> *Artem.* 68-70.

<sup>98</sup> *ibid.* 66.11-2: ‘Ἀρτέμει, εἰσηκούσθη ἡ δέησίς σου καὶ ἡ χάρις τῶν ἰαμάτων δεδωρηταί σοι.’

<sup>99</sup> *PArtem.* 174.1-2: ‘εἰσηκούσθη ἡ δέησίς σου καὶ ἡ χάρις τῶν ἰαμάτων δεδωρηταί σοι.’

merely a suspicion is confirmed by Symeon Metaphrastes' *Martyrium Artemii*. Symeon preserves John's text almost intact in his *Menologion* (10th c.) which was compiled in Constantinople.<sup>100</sup> However, he does not omit to mention at the end of the text Artemius' healing qualities.<sup>101</sup> Two more sources which have also been argued to originate in a Constantinopolitan context, the Armenian *Synaxaria* of Ter Israel and Gregory Dserents, also make special reference to the martyr's healing cult.<sup>102</sup>

But there is a further point which counters the argument of Constantinopolitan authorship. Even if one decides to overlook the absence of references to Artemius' miraculous cult, it is again suspicious that the *Passion of St Artemius* does not mention the exact resting place of the saint's relics. For someone who resided in the capital or was familiar with it, and was writing the *passion* of a saint whose body was revered in one of the city's churches, there is no obvious explanation as to why he did not clarify where the centre of his cult was. The text, copying the old *passion*, states that an Antiochene deaconess called Ariste transferred Artemius' body to Constantinople 'placing it in a conspicuous place, since she wanted to build a home worthy of the saint and great martyr Artemius.'<sup>103</sup> This place is known to have been the church of St John the Forerunner in Oxeia in Constantinople. It is the place where the *Miracula Artemii* take place in which there are also detailed descriptions of the Church of St John.<sup>104</sup> The church is also explicitly mentioned in Symeon Metaphrastes. Symeon modifies the *Passion of St Artemius* and adds an explanation about the current resting place

<sup>100</sup> Symeon Metaphrastes, *Martyrium Artemii* (BHG 172) PG 115.1160-1212. For the use of John's *Passion of St Artemius* as the basis for Symeon's redaction, see Høgel 2002: 181.

<sup>101</sup> Symeon Metaphrastes, *Martyrium Artemii* PG 115.1212A: '[...] καὶ τὸ σῶμα δὲ καὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν εἰς γῆν καταλείπει, μέγα Χριστιανοῖς παραμύθιον, ἱάμα ψυχῆς, ἱάμα σώματος πάσης ἐπιβουλῆς καὶ βλάβης ἀλεξιτήριον.'

<sup>102</sup> See the discussion in Crisafulli and Nesbitt 1997: 4-6. 'The emphasis which we find on miracles (especially Ar D's [*Synaxarium* of Gregory Dserents] specific reference to the "cure of hernias" and its relation of a miracle story) leads us to suspect that both texts may well have originated at the Church of St. John Prodromos.', *ibid.* 6.

<sup>103</sup> *Artem.* 67.12-5. Cf. *PArtem.* 174.14-175.3: 'καὶ ἀνέπεμψεν ἐν τῇ πανευδαίμονι Κωνσταντίνου πόλει ἐν ἐπισήμῳ τόπῳ, ὡς βουλομένη οἰκοδομῆσαι οἶκον ἄξιον τῶν λειψάνων τοῦ ἀγιωτάτου μάρτυρος Ἀρτεμίου, πρὸς τὸ ἐπιτελεῖσθαι σύναξιν εἰς τιμὴν τοῦ ἀγίου μάρτυρος.'

<sup>104</sup> See fn. above.

of the saint's remains, saying that Ariste was not able to fulfil her wish of building a church for the martyr, and so his body remained in the place where it initially came to rest after its transfer to Constantinople, that is in the Church of St John the Forerunner.<sup>105</sup> The Armenian *Synaxaria* also refer to the church.<sup>106</sup> All texts, therefore, with a Constantinopolitan background specify the location of Artemius' tomb, and make reference to his miracles or at least his gift of miraculous healing. However, the *Passion of St Artemius* remains silent about this fundamental information regarding his cult, which confirms that it was not written in the capital.

Two further observations have been made by Kazhdan against John of Damascus' authorship, although he admits that 'neither of these observations has the force of a definite proof';<sup>107</sup> and quite so. The first concerns a passage in the *Passion of St Artemius* in which the route that Julian took to Syria is described. Julian is said to have departed from Constantinople, crossed Phrygia past its farthest city Iconium, and circumvented Isauria, eventually crossing the Taurus mountains.<sup>108</sup> Kazhdan notes that Iconium 'is the farthest polis of Phrygia if seen from Constantinople not Damascus, and this definition is hardly that of Damascene.' Yet John is clearly describing Julian's journey from Constantinople through its various stages up to Syria, and it is therefore perfectly reasonable that he adopts Julian's perspective. There is no reason to assume that he should have described Julian's route from his own point of view. Kazhdan's second observation is that 'the hagiographer speaks of Roman and "our" laws that were rejected by Artemios, who announced that he was Christian

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<sup>105</sup> Symeon Metaphrastes, *Martyrium Artemii* PG 115.1212A: 'πρὸς τὴν πανευδαίμονα Κωνσταντινούπολιν παραπέμπει [τὸ σῶμα], σπουδὴν μὲν ποιουμένη τοῦ καὶ ναὸν αὐτῷ ἄξιον ἀνοικοδομῆσαι, θερμότερας πίστεως τῆς πρὸς αὐτὸν γνώρισμα' μὴ δυνηθεῖσα δὲ τῷ θελήματι πέρας ἐπαγαγεῖν, ταύτη τοι καὶ διέμεινεν εἰς δεῦρο τῷ τοῦ Προδρόμου ναῷ τὰ ἱερὰ τούτου λείψανα, θησαυρὸς ὥσπερ ἀδάπανος συντηρούμενα.'

<sup>106</sup> See again Crisafulli and Nesbitt 1997: 4-6.

<sup>107</sup> Kazhdan 1988: 201.

<sup>108</sup> *Artem.* 24.4-15.



and not Roman or Greek. “Our” as equated to Greek in this sentence is not one to be expected from a Syrian.’<sup>109</sup> The passage in question reads as follows:

Ἀρτέμιον τὸν τοὺς θεοὺς ἐνυβρίσαντα καὶ τοὺς Ῥωμαϊκοὺς τε καὶ ἡμετέρους καταπατήσαντα νόμους Χριστιανὸν τε αὐτὸν ἀντὶ Ῥωμαίου καὶ Ἑλλήνος καθομολογήσαντα καὶ ἀντὶ δουκὸς καὶ αὐγουσταλίου Γαλιλαῖον ἑαυτὸν ὀνομάσαντα τῇ τελευταίᾳ τοῦ θανάτου παραδεδώκαμεν ψήφῳ, τὴν μιὰν αὐτοῦ κεφαλὴν ξίφει ἐκκοπῆναι κελεύσαντες.

For Artemius, who insulted the gods and trampled on the Roman laws and ours, and confessed himself a Christian instead of a Roman and a Greek, and called himself a Galilaean instead of *dux* and *augustalis*, we have passed a decree ordering that his defiled head be cut off by the sword.<sup>110</sup>

Julian condemns Artemius for disregarding the Roman laws and ‘our’ laws, namely the laws of those who believe in the gods. Instead, Artemius confesses himself to be a Christian; he is neither a Roman or a Greek. Kazhdan is right in equating ‘ours’ with ‘Greek’, but Greek here denotes a pagan, not an ethnically Greek, all the more because it is Julian the one who is speaking, not Artemius. Thus there is no incompatibility between John’s identity as Syrian and the use of ‘our’ to refer to ‘Greek’.

### *Literary topoi*

When John digs into his sources to retell the stories of saints, he draws out content which often remains unchanged in its main points, trading on the storylines he had collected, as he states in the introduction to the *Passion of St Artemius*: ‘I too will therefore start with the account of him as the writings of the ancients relate. / Ἀρξομαι τοίνυν κάγὼ τῆς κατ’ αὐτὸν ἱστορίας, ὥς αἱ τῶν παλαιῶν διαγορεύουσι δέλτοι.’<sup>111</sup> Significantly, to those earlier

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<sup>109</sup> Kazhdan 1988: 201.

<sup>110</sup> *Artem.* 64.3-6.

<sup>111</sup> *Artem.* 4.17-8. John’s authorial statement regarding the use of older accounts about Artemius as narrative prototypes for his own work is not mentioned in the *Martyrium Artemii* by Symeon Metaphrastes. The latter,

narratives were fused not only the episodes that were deemed worthy of mention by their authors but also the literary conventions that ubiquitously composed the late antique and Byzantine writing culture and were incorporated into them. Thus, by borrowing content, John also endorses in his homilies the stereotyped and formularised diction of his source texts, especially the plethora of *topoi* associated with hagiographic composition. To take one illustrative example from his encomia, St Artemius' experience in prison – a scene characteristic of many accounts of martyrdom – is rendered in conventional descriptive terms, which include Christ's consoling appearance before the martyr and Artemius' abstinence from food and drink.<sup>112</sup> Both motifs originate in the older *passion* of Artemius consulted by John.<sup>113</sup>

Apart from stock formulas and themes, under the notion of *topos* also fall the rhetorical standards of a literary tradition that delighted in the endurance of time-tested devices and techniques. These are also strongly articulated in John's homiletic discourse and are situated within an established system of literary influences which he let impress their own mark on his rhetorical and narrative style. I will cite as an example one of the concluding sections of the *Encomium of St Barbara* (19.1-38). The passage, a summary of the martyr's virtuous character and admirable conduct in the face of martyrdom, brims with the conventional themes that, in a yet more florid manner, transcend the rest of the encomium. More notably, however, it furthermore rests upon a rhetorical form of praise that had become increasingly popular in the two centuries preceding John of Damascus: the salutations. As their name suggests, the salutations were a series of phrases beginning with the acclamation 'hail' (χαῖρε) which were addressed to the subject of an encomium. The most famous and enduring

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based, probably exclusively, on the Damascenean reworking (cf. Høgel 2002: 181), omits altogether the introductory/programmatic sections of John's text (*Artem.* 1.1-5.14).

<sup>112</sup> *Artem.* 49.10-50.13. Deprivation of food as a form of punishment figures in other *passions* too, e.g. *Passio Passio Eugeniae* 34. The same is true of the appearances of Christ to the imprisoned martyrs; see also *PBarb.* 917.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. *PArtem.* 171.1-10.

in their impact on the Byzantine liturgical tradition were those contained in the Akathistos Hymn to the Virgin Mary.<sup>114</sup> The range of their dissemination, however, was not limited to hymnography; preachers also developed a fondness for this distinct form of homage to a figure of devotion, taking advantage of the rhythmical rigour it imposed on laudatory speech and employing it to activate the devotional memory of the congregants.<sup>115</sup> Sets of salutations are found in the homilies of John's contemporaries, Andrew of Crete and Germanos of Constantinople.<sup>116</sup> In the *Encomium of St Barbara*, John uses the verbal and symbolic potential of a rhetorical form that had carved its own place in the tradition to compose some 16 intricate 'hail' sentences of variable length which execute the anticipated farewell portrait of the martyr.

By employing the commonplace elements of his sources and combining them with stereotyped rhetorical mechanisms, John created a synthesis that prioritised the expectation of narratives based on familiar modes of literary expression. The omnipresence of thematic and rhetorical *topoi* perhaps create the impression of a cumulative, sedimentary discourse which sacrifices freshness of expression and vision for the sake of beneficial repetitiveness. But this should not muddle our assessment of the Damascenean homilies and the search for originality. For, despite their seeming rigidity, *topoi* are versatile enough to animate discussions about the precise function they perform in a text. While it is contradictory to speak of the genuineness of a stereotyped passage in terms of its conception, it is possible to detect genuineness in terms of its treatment.<sup>117</sup> For example, Tsironis provides a detailed

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<sup>114</sup> For the salutations in the Akathistos Hymn and the literary precedent it set, see Peltomaa 2001: 36-9.

<sup>115</sup> Salutation sequences must have had a wide resonance among the faithful, given mainly their strong association with the veneration of the Theotokos and their systematic use as a common form of exaltation in Marian hymns and sermons, undoubtedly under the widespread influence of the Akathistos Hymn. It is no coincidence that most salutation passages in homilies from this period occur in festal panegyrics on Mary (see footnote below).

<sup>116</sup> Andrew of Crete, *In Nativitatem Mariae IV* PG 97.864B-865B; *In Annuntiationem* PG 97.896B-C; Germanos of Constantinople, *In Annuntiationem* PG 98.321A-C. Cf. Efthymiadis 2015: 378.

<sup>117</sup> It is no surprise, then, that Byzantine sensitiveness to variations in commonplace usages was crucial in debates about authorial style and authenticity. See Papaioannou 2014: 27-8.

description of the variants of a common pattern across eighth- and ninth-century homilists: the desire of the preacher to address a speech of praise to his subject, and simultaneously the fear that overcomes him in face of his task.<sup>118</sup> The importance of Tsironis' article lies beyond the specific results gained from the case-study on the desire-fear *topos*: it sets a general example of how to map insightfully the transformation and use of stock themes and structures.

Yet to focus on form and authorial treatment, though a necessary step towards a more nuanced understanding of the nature of *topoi*, would be to limit ourselves to technical aspects and artificially separate these conventional literary units from what has convincingly been argued – and is also conspicuous in the present study – to be one of their principal qualities, the communication of meaning: '[...] one should also be aware that apparently prefabricated units of expression (*topoi*, quotations, allusions and proverbs) may have been chosen precisely because of their communicative power.'<sup>119</sup> The frequent recurrence of a stock of well-tried themes suggests that they fulfilled a function too important to be ignored. For example, from the impressive range of *topoi* associated with the stories of martyrdom under pagan rulers, many served to perpetuate the stereotypical vision of idolatry as a set of abominable practices, reaffirming the supremacy of the Christian faith through scenes of mute gods and collapsing statues.<sup>120</sup> Similarly, descriptions of furious persecutors who made use of their tyrannical power to break the martyrs' resistance cultivated the virtue of perseverance in the endurance of difficulties.<sup>121</sup> Such *topoi* were used and reused to form

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<sup>118</sup> See Tsironis 2010.

<sup>119</sup> Garrison 2001: 246.

<sup>120</sup> See, for instance, Kristensen 2014 on idol destruction and the function of the *topos* of pagan statues on columns.

<sup>121</sup> For the image of persecutors in hagiography, see Petruccione 2016.

narratives that ‘must have resonated with the particular worldview of their audiences in order for them to be engaging, convincing and ultimately worth copying.’<sup>122</sup>

The significance of this aspect of literary commonplaces lies in the endurance of their value over time and with respect to different audiences. *Topoi* became widespread because they were often perceived to be expressions of unchanging realities, and have, therefore, a certain contemporary relevance. John would not have followed the well-established conventions for the portrayal of the pagan persecutors in his homilies, elaborating on the more moderate descriptions of the primary hagiographic accounts, or borrowed the episode of the destruction of Apollo’s temple during Julian’s stay at Daphne in the *Passion of St Artemius*, if these additions did not have a meaningful effect on the reception of the homilies by his audiences. For an eighth-century congregation which was separated from the narrated events by the distance of time, the anti-pagan stereotypes of John’s homilies did not have the same importance as for Christians living at a time when paganism was still a live issue. But ‘commonplaces are cultural material with both past and present currency within a given language community.’<sup>123</sup> Even in a period in which paganism was practically inexistent, these *topoi* could take on new meanings, despite their apparent immutability, and be re-employed in new narratives, helping the faithful to see themselves reflected in the life stories of saints.

The context in which a *topos* is found is decisive for its function. John’s audience would have no difficulty figuring out the preacher’s message and allusions behind seemingly plain hagiographic narratives relying largely on stock components. But the way for us to discover how literary commonplaces should be approached is through the identification of the contexts in which they are to be understood. As we shall see in chapter four, for example, contemporary historical events seem to have influenced John’s stereotypical portrayal of pagan as well as Christian figures of authority in his hagiographic accounts. In the following

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<sup>122</sup> Kristensen 2014: 268.

<sup>123</sup> Moss 2011: 1.

chapter, we will trace the saintly virtues that decorate John Chrysostom's literary portrait in the tradition of the monastic literature to the precepts of Palestinian monasticism in the time of John of Damascus and its spiritual prestige among local Christians. For, although abstract, *topoi* were not necessarily unhistorical. Chrysostom's ascetic conduct in John of Damascus' encomium probably resembles the customs of the historical John Chrysostom during his withdrawal from Antioch as well as the pious practices of his emulators, the monks and laymen comprising the Damascene's audience in the eighth century.<sup>124</sup> Even lessons of moral and spiritual improvement are based on the rhetorical impact of conventional themes, as will be seen from the description of the relationship between St Barbara and her pagan father, also in the next chapter. The analysis of stereotyped authorial statements in John's homilies will finally reveal how the preacher himself expressed his thoughts and emotions through them.<sup>125</sup> In the chapters that follow, therefore, *topoi* are not disregarded as elements with indeterminable content but are recast as communicative devices that encode meaning. Many traditional themes are reiterated in his texts, inviting a process of interpretation which provides an insight into aspects of theological, social, political, and personal nature.<sup>126</sup>

## Metaphrasis

The analysis of the inner structure of the homilies pursued in this chapter reveals that John undertook a process of collecting, adapting, and appropriately incorporating primary literary

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<sup>124</sup> Ascetic commonplaces are an integral part of the reconstruction of asceticism in sixth-century Syria in Harvey 1990. Pratsch comments on the historicity of *topoi*: 'The examples show that the use of a topos in a saint's *Life* does not necessarily require that the information be dismissed as unhistorical. [...] For a topos may coincide with historical truth, and fiction may contain historical facts.', in Pratsch 2003: 64.

<sup>125</sup> On rhetorical commonplaces as a means of conveying genuine feelings and emotions, see Garrison 2001; with regard to particular *topoi*, Tsironis 2010; Papadogiannakis 2017a.

<sup>126</sup> The interpretative possibilities of commonplace material is particularly emphasised by Garrison who notes 'the need for a reading open to a maximal rather than a minimal interpretation of apparently stereotyped expressions', in Garrison 2001: 246.

material into his sermons. To produce an account about a saint for a congregation largely meant to redact older texts that contained the details of his or her extraordinary life and feats. Even when the borrowed material was eventually limited in favour of the preacher's words, as is the case with the *Encomium of St John Chrysostom*, it is clear that John pursued access to other sources with the intention of integrating them, in rewritten form, into his homilies. The redaction of earlier versions of hagiographical, for the most part, texts, and the composing of new renderings of the accounts of saints was a common literary practice already in the seventh century.<sup>127</sup> Ecclesiastical literati, such as Sophronius of Jerusalem and Leontius of Neapolis, make explicit in their hagiographies their reliance on and reproduction of previous narratives of saints' lives. Sophronius laments that he was only able to encounter two small homilies by Cyril about Sts Cyrus and John, while Leontius states in his *Life of St John the Almsgiver* that he wishes to expand on the previous *life* composed by Sophronius and John Moschus, and write a text whose style is more approachable by a wider readership compared to that of his predecessors.<sup>128</sup> George of Alexandria, also from the seventh century, notes his use of Palladius as a source for the biography of St John Chrysostom, as well as his recourse to the *History* of Socrates Scholasticus, much in the way of John's employment of historiographical works in the *Passion of St Artemius*.<sup>129</sup> In the eighth century, John of Damascus' contemporary, Andrew of Crete, wrote a panegyric on St George which is built on a combination of the saint's *passion* and the preacher's encomiastic statements, resembling John's technique of exploiting the old *Passio Barbarae* and *Passio Artemii* for his encomia on the saints.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> According to Rapp 1995: 35, attested in Sophronius of Alexandria, George of Alexandria, Leontius of Neapolis, Theodore of Paphos, and Theodore of Trinitus; see also Høgel 2014: 183 with reference to Leontius of Neapolis.

<sup>128</sup> Sophronius of Jerusalem, *Laudatio Cyri et Ioannis* (BHG 475; CPG 7645) PG 87.3384C; Leontius of Neapolis, *Vita Ioannis Eleemosynari* (BHG 886; CPG 7882) 2-3.

<sup>129</sup> George of Alexandria, *Vita Ioannis Chrysostomi* (BHG 873; CPG 7979) 72.

<sup>130</sup> Andrew of Crete, *Homilia in s. Georgium* (BHG 681; CPG 8186) PG 97.1169-1192.

In all the above cases, hagiographers sought to reuse, to a varying degree, the written tradition that existed about the celebrated saints. We notice, however, that their method of doing so was not universal but depended either on the nature of their sources (George of Alexandria, for example, had no strictly hagiographic texts about John Chrysostom available)<sup>131</sup> or the form of the new composition (Leontius pursued a literary style that was deliberately less ornate). Among these varying ways of treating older hagiographical texts, John's own approach to the original martyrs' *passions* in the *Encomium of St Barbara* and in those parts of the *Passion of St Artemius* describing the scene of Artemius' martyrdom was the exponent of a particular authorial attitude which indicated a critical awareness of the poor literary quality of the sources and of the need for their stylistic updating. In effect, John based his homilies on revised versions of the saints' martyria. His rewriting of the older accounts is strongly reminiscent of the practice of *metaphrasis*, the literary redaction of earlier hagiographic texts that became popular from the ninth century onwards, and anticipates the remarkable work of Symeon Metaphrastes (10th c.), who undertook to rework 148 earlier *vitae* and edit them in a *menologion* where they were organised according to the feasts of the liturgical year.<sup>132</sup> In both instances in which metaphrasis may be observed in John, the old versions of Barbara and Artemius' accounts are adapted to 'acceptable' stylistic standards, and their content receives careful treatment without radical alterations. The passion narratives are rephrased but remain, overall, strikingly similar to the previous form, thus pointing to a conscious metaphrastic attempt, albeit in the context of a panegyric sermon. That these features of John's rewriting practice can justify a comparison with the metaphrastic method of Symeon and his group of redactors can be confirmed by the study of the latter's literary techniques. Apart from the obvious adoption of a classicising idiom on a stylistic level and

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<sup>131</sup> See Antonopoulou 2016: 8.

<sup>132</sup> The only available monograph to date on the subject of *metaphrasis* and the metaphrastic *menologion* of Symeon is Høgel 2002. Articles by the same author include Høgel 2014 and 1996. For other contributions, see Efthymiadis 1991; Rapp 1995; Schiffer 1996;. On the term *metaphrasis* and its connotations, Høgel 2002: 57-9.



the respect for the content of the primary compositions on a narrative level, changes involving the strengthening of certain thematic aspects, such as asceticism, the suppression of dialogues and the elaboration of the narrative parts, and the over-emphasis on the persecutors as deranged individuals, also have parallels in John's texts.<sup>133</sup> Some of the defining characteristics of the Metaphrastic redaction are therefore already present in his hagiographic homilies.<sup>134</sup>

It is interesting that the word 'metaphrasis' is first found in the ninth century in titles of manuscripts that contained encomia, indicating that rewriting was a process expected to be part of homiletic forms of hagiography.<sup>135</sup> The fact, furthermore, that the first abundant attestations of metaphrasis come from the work of homilists such as John of Sardis and Niketas David Paphlagon implies a particularly strong connection between the delivery of panegyric sermons on saints' feast days and the incorporation into them of reworked hagiographic accounts.<sup>136</sup> Despite objections that the production of a homily that exploits older hagiographical texts 'should perhaps not be classified as a redaction at all but a reuse of material in a new genre',<sup>137</sup> it is probably more correct to say that it is precisely in homilies that redaction acquired some of its distinctive features, quite before the ninth century. Different ways of approaching the content of primary hagiographical sources, exemplified in the writings of the seventh- and eighth-century hagiographers and encomiasts, resulted in the spread of a particular type of literary dialogue with the original texts which entailed their meticulous revision and transformation line by line, and took root in the homiletic tradition,

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<sup>133</sup> For a discussion, see Høgel 1996: 13-7.

<sup>134</sup> As can also be seen from Schiffer's examination of the characteristics of the Metaphrastic method, it is often difficult to determine the features of the metaphrastic redactions as compared to those of earlier redactions of old hagiographies; Schiffer 1996.

<sup>135</sup> Efthymiadis 1991: 28 notes the first attestation of the term in John of Sardis' *Life of St Nikephoros* 'more than one and a half centuries before the revising and re-editing of old pieces of hagiography was carried out by Symeon Metaphrastes.'

<sup>136</sup> See Høgel 2002: 57.

<sup>137</sup> *ibid.*

as can be seen especially from John of Damascus' *Encomium of St Barbara*. In terms of literary orientation and method, John's style of writing and that of his successors in the ninth century, was effectively 'metaphrastic'.

But in order to partly do justice to the objection presented above, it should be pointed out that, although it seems appropriate to speak of the editing of hagiographical material in homilies to saints in this early period, it is equally legitimate to think of homilists as simply adjusting the original material to the demands of the homiletic genre. John introduced to his homilies refined versions of the old *passions* to make them fit his preaching style and aims, and not for the sake of producing improved versions of existing hagiographies. By contrast, the Metaphrastic programme was based on the principle of redaction.<sup>138</sup> Surely, the ultimate goal of Symeon Metaphrastes was the creation of a collection of saints' *lives* and *passions* that would serve a liturgical purpose and have a beneficial effect on the faithful. But the obligatory condition for the inclusion of any text in the yearly menologion of Symeon was for it to pass through the necessary stylistic updating according to contemporary literary standards.

John's writing method, then, is 'metaphrastic' but not 'Metaphrastic', in the sense that it did not form part of a broader literary and liturgical programme similar to that of Symeon. The explanation for his revisionist attitude towards the source material may rather be found in the role he wanted the hagiographic literature to play in his homilies. The centrality of the celebrated saint in his speech as an exemplar for the faithful was complemented and reinforced by the use of the very accounts that preserved their acts. For John those old narratives of saints represented effective instruments for the spiritual edification of the

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<sup>138</sup> 'Style was to a certain audience needed to save the reputation of the stories on the saints. [...] this was certainly the fundamental issue and the reason for producing a *redacted*, and not just a corrected or authorized, menologion.' Høgel 2002: 138.

audience. Their value lay in their being retold. That they were redacted was a secondary consequence of their incorporation into the homilies, but never the primary objective.

The way John treated his hagiographical sources confirms that they were employed as one out of many types of mechanisms that he had at his disposal for the instruction of the faithful. In the *Encomium of St Barbara*, the ‘metaphrased’ passages of the original *passion* are combined with John’s own interventions in order to achieve the pre-eminence of certain thematic aspects of the text. The *Passion of St Artemius* also reproduces the *Passio Artemii*, yet the sections about Artemius’ martyrdom are closely related to the scene of Eugenius and Macarius’ trial, an episode that John thought worthy of inventing. The old account of Artemius is reused but only as part of a new narrative continuum which transforms the story into a targeted invective against paganism. Even John’s decision to avoid Palladius’ storyline in the *Encomium of St John* and borrow very little from him, despite the wealth of information he provides about the saint, indicates that John wished to give a different turn to the encomium, and that the extract he reedits from Palladius was suitable as long as it served the purpose of the speech, in this case the emphasis on the monastic qualities of John Chrysostom’s life.

Metaphrasis was a significant component of John’s homiletic practice, which furthermore displayed many of the characteristics that would later take on their definitive form in the work of Symeon Metaphrastes. However, at this stage it represented a literary method that was far from systematic, as John’s varied approaches demonstrate. In it John found a useful way to make the presence of the saints more vivid through the retelling of the events of their lives, as they were crystallised in the writings of the old hagiographers, but always in accordance with the message he wanted to transmit. Sometimes the very fact of compiling as much information about a saint as possible, and creating an account that combined not only his *passion* but also a wider range of sources, as in the *Passion of St Artemius*, was in itself an

act of praise for the saint, a proof of his far-reaching fame. At others, a few lines from what previous writers had to say were a welcome addition to the preacher's own discourse. Metaphrasis was above all a flexible means of instruction.

The aim of this chapter has been to explore the nature of John's art of preaching, how he constructed his homilies in order for them to function as pieces of praise for the saints and as devices of instruction for the audiences. It soon became clear that to elucidate the process underlying the composition of these texts it was necessary to look both inside them, particularly at those parts concerning the events of the saints' lives, and outside them, at those accounts in which the preacher was able to gather information about each of these holy figures. For not only was John using external sources in order to collect facts about the saints, but was incorporating them, sometimes paraphrased, other times even verbatim, into his homilies, approaching them with a high degree of sophistication and appreciation. Hagiographic sources were as important to him as the very act of preaching. Their use took on various forms. For example, as a work with a carefully defined beginning, middle and end, John's *Encomium of St Barbara* was intended as a 'complete' treatment of Barbara's old *passion*, with distinct encomiastic parts and a meticulously presented life account. Through elaborations, omissions, and modifications, the older text was transformed into an integral part of the encomium. The picture we get from the *Encomium of St John Chrysostom* is very different. Here the Damascene increases his audience's familiarity with John Chrysostom through a vivid portrait largely created by his own rhetorical skill rather than through a retelling of the saint's life based on previous accounts. Nevertheless, he does make limited use of Palladius, indicating that he was aware of the existence of sources on Chrysostom and that he was willing to use them, but only in the measure that this served his purposes. With the *Passion of St Artemius* we return to the situation we witness in Barbara's encomium. The

range of primary sources, however, is amplified to include not only Artemius' *passion*, but also passages from late antique church historians as well as a combination of sources on pagan literature with which John recreates the dialogues between Eugenius, Macarius, and Julian.

The study of John's sources, useful also for rejecting some doubts concerning his authorship of the *Passion of St Artemius*, confirms the existence of a pattern that is universal in his hagiographic homilies: the reuse of previous writings about the celebrated saints. It is a norm that becomes the hallmark of his preaching and is vital for interpreting his sermons, since their meaning often derives from his treatment of those writings, as will be seen in the following chapters. This treatment also involves his respect for the traditional commonplaces of hagiography which, as several scholars have argued and will also become evident later, can be the bearers of genuine meaning depending on their context. Eventually, John's attitude towards the material he borrows from literary sources and the hagiographical tradition is dictated by his pastoral aims. This is fundamental for fully appreciating his preaching method. Seen in the light of later literary developments, as reflected in the metaphrastic project of Symeon Metaphrastes, John belonged to a tradition that put special emphasis on the reusing and reworking of earlier hagiographic accounts, giving them new life. However, he adopted this practice because it was essential to his pastoral ministry; for him it was crucial to be able to share the accounts of the saints with his congregations in the new framework of the homilies. The retelling of the saints' stories served a practical purpose and this explains why it took several forms in his works. John's case helps us place the origins of *metaphrasis* in a context in which it still represented a literary method among the many used by homilists rather than a literary project in itself as would happen in the following centuries. John was an early representative of the metaphrastic movement before that took its definitive form with Symeon Metaphrastes in the tenth century.

### 3 | Fulfilling the Christian ideal: saints as models of family and monastic life

One of the primary purposes of preaching was to deepen the religious experience of the faithful. The mode of representation of holy men and women in hagiographic homilies was an effective way to secure adherence to Christian ideals, and the reworking of older *passions* and other texts, which was dealt with in the previous chapter, was an integral part of that process. To a certain extent, John of Damascus' representation of the realm of hagiography remained influenced by the literary principles governing hagiographical narratives. Nevertheless, he often departed from the original framework of those tales to achieve a desirable effect, and particularly to associate the saints' lives with the audience's life experiences. The two literary strategies were not mutually exclusive. While relying on the broader historical background against which the events of the saints' lives unfolded and preserving the conventions and patterns of its representation, John was still able to construct his own view of the past, raising simultaneously a wide range of issues both of enduring importance and contemporary relevance.

Treating the wide range of topics that result from the preacher's retelling of a saint's story is a demanding task and omissions are only to be expected. A fruitful way to examine how John's hagiographic homilies touched upon the everyday experience of the audience is to adopt a twofold perspective: that of the homily as a means of inculcating Christian values, as well as an instrument of defining and defending the identity of the Christian community against external pressure. The first concerns the microcosm of the individual and the lifelong quest of the Christian for holiness. Specifically, I will consider how John exploits the world of hagiography to create ideals of Christian behaviour and spiritual attainment in the family

sphere, and the way he accommodates within the general framework of his audience's values a set of ideals that are characteristic of the monastic life. Chapter Four will then focus on the second approach to John's homilies proposed here, discussing the large-scale issues of the demarcation of the faithful from other religious traditions, and the monitoring of the political authorities.

Family and the monastic ideal are the two elements of John of Damascus' hagiographic discourse that will be addressed in the current chapter. The reason for this choice lies in the homilies themselves, particularly in the *Encomium of St Barbara* and the *Encomium of St John Chrysostom*. The former is concerned in its core with the unfolding of a family conflict in which Barbara, determined to cling to her Christian faith in the pagan world that surrounds her, faces the threats and bodily tortures of her father and persecutor. The latter walks the audience through John Chrysostom's path to perfection by virtue of ascetic discipline and divine grace, describing his rigorous renunciation of worldly comforts, his extreme exercise in humility and the extirpation of his passions, and his unique capacity to instruct the faithful. One should not expect to find in these homilies a commentary on family or monasticism. On no occasion does John deviate from the main narrative framework to treat matters of general concern. He rather attempts to sensitise his listeners to the requirements of a Christian life by challenging them to see the world through the eyes of the saints, integrating rhetorically his pastoral message into the sequence of episodes from the saints' lives. Everything John has to say relating to family relationships or the exemplarity of the monastic endeavour represents nothing more than a thread of the narrative which must be identified, disentangled, and made visible.

This is particularly pertinent for the second reason why I have selected family and the monastic life as the subject of the present chapter. For they constitute the first of two main dimensions of John's hagiographic writing, that of the saints as models of personal spiritual

development. Both are issues that the preacher raised in order to engage with the inner life of the individual as opposed to those concerning the life of the whole community (chapter four). Even so, it is reasonable to ask how these seemingly incompatible notions, family and monasticism, may be reconciled in the same discussion, which brings me to the third and final motive behind the choice to concentrate on them. The answer is in John's intention to create a unifying element in his homilies and in the consciousness of his audience, which is the ideal of perfection and union with the divine. As we shall see, the *Encomium of St Barbara* is not simply a reminder of the consequences of a family life with God or without him, but goes one step further, suggesting faith and constancy as the path to God and to one's membership in the family of heaven. Equally, though acclaiming the saint's monastic virtues, the *Encomium of St John Chrysostom* is not meant as an exemplary illustration of the life in the monastery or in ascetic isolation. It rather brings the monastic spirit within reach of the ordinary man, exhorting him to achieve a life in Christ. The differences between the hagiographic narratives do not alter the sameness of their message: the fulfilment of the Christian ideal.

### *Family*

John's attitude to family relationships may not indicate systematic pastoral reflection on the matter, but points to a powerful strand in his theological thought and that of his predecessors that puts forward the idea of a heavenly family of which every Christian could be a member and on which the human family is modelled. It is a notion closely associated with the ideal of



absolute and unconditional love that runs consistently throughout his homilies.<sup>1</sup> Love, as glimpsed through John's writings, has its archetype in God, in the Father's love for the Son and the world, and finds its ultimate expression in the incarnation of the Logos.<sup>2</sup> As in the apostolic and patristic traditions, so too in John these loving relationships were typically perceived in familial terms: '[God the Father] manifested his fatherly love for us, for [Christ] was his only-begotten and consubstantial Son.'<sup>3</sup> The incomparable bond of fatherly love between the Father and the Son, and the Father and mankind, lay at the heart of the Christian understanding of the mystery of the Trinity and the divine economy for the world's salvation. By the same measure, Christians were sons of God, not in the primary sense of the word, which applies only to the unique Son, but through the grace of adoption. Adoption (υιοθεσία), a concept with a marked presence already in Pauline thought, claimed for believers the fruits of God's fatherly love through baptism and the participation in Christ's incorruptibility and immortality.<sup>4</sup> It denoted a new familial relationship with God which humanity was granted after the incarnation and resurrection of Christ.

Much more than the exercise of pastoral care, then, family language indicated a deeply rooted theological idiom for expressing the trinitarian communion and God-human relationships, the nucleus of which was the love of the Father. Familial notions were, in fact, so central to the formulation of doctrine that John has to warn that terms such as 'fatherhood'

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<sup>1</sup> See *Transfig.* 5.4-5 (love as 'mountain of virtues'); *ibid.* 10.2-8 (love as 'summit and citadel of virtues', with citation of *Cor.* 1 13.1-3); *Ficus* 1.36-9 (Christ's sacrificial love is the paradigm of supreme love); *Sabbat.* 39.3-4 (love paired with other virtues leads to salvation and exaltation).

<sup>2</sup> The Father's love for the Son was evidently manifested at the Baptism of Christ and again at the Transfiguration through the heavenly voice proclaiming 'This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased' (*Mt.* 3.17; 17.5); the two episodes are connected by John in *Transfig.* 3.1-37. For the relation between the Baptism and the Transfiguration, see comment in Andreopoulos 2015: 47-9. For God's love for humankind revealed in the incarnation of his Son, see *Ficus* 2.31-4.

<sup>3</sup> *Ficus* 2.30-1. See further *Sabbat.* 23.13-4 where John has Jesus exclaim about his rising from the dead: 'for thus I substantiate the fatherly love'. For the tracing of familial language and the concept of God as Father to Paul as well as to the Jewish and Roman traditions, see Mengestu 2013.

<sup>4</sup> For references to the adoption in Paul, see *Rom.* 8.14-5; *Gal.* 4.5; *Eph.* 1.5. The development of the term is discussed in Russel 2004 with reference to the Church Fathers, such as Irenaeus, Clement, Athanasius, and Maximus.

(πατρότης) and ‘sonship’ (υιότης) do not represent concepts applied to God by humans but rather the teaching of the holy scriptures as transmitted to us.<sup>5</sup> Citing Paul, he also goes on to emphasise that any ‘fatherhood’ (or ‘family’; πατριά), whether in heaven or earth, emanates from God’s fatherhood.<sup>6</sup> The passage is important because, apart from stressing expressly the significance of family terminology with reference to God, as clearly implied elsewhere in his work, firstly, it traces familial relations to the divinity by attributing human knowledge of the ‘fatherhood’ and ‘sonship’ to divine revelation through the scriptures; and secondly, it presents family relationships in the created order as analogous to those in God.

Such notions were an essential adjunct of John’s theological discourse with significant ontological and soteriological implications but do not transmit ordinary perceptions of the family, as these may be gleaned from the numerous family portrayals scattered in hagiographical literature. The role of such representations has increasingly been appreciated by scholars, through scrutiny of narrative depictions of family and kinship ties, or of the authors’ autobiographical allusions to their own family experiences.<sup>7</sup> Hagiographical approaches to the family were varied, from the praise of family members as tangible examples of piety and saintly virtue in the fourth-century funeral orations of the two Gregories,<sup>8</sup> to the common theme of the rejection of familial bonds in martyr and monastic literature,<sup>9</sup> to the accounts of saints who abandoned the solitary religious life they had initially sought to return to a life near their families.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *Expos.* 8.142-6.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.* Cf. Paul, *Ephes.* 3.14-5.

<sup>7</sup> For an overview of some of the trends in the study of the family and the variety of themes that may be addressed, see Brubaker and Tougher 2013. For a historical approach to the early Christian family, Nathan 2000.

<sup>8</sup> See Gregory of Nyssa’s *Life of Macrina* and Gregory Nazianzene’s orations *On his Brother Caesarius* and *On his Sister Gorgonia*.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Talbot 1990 and Vuloanto 2015: 95-129. For opposition to the will of the family in martyr literature, Bradley 2003; Rhee 2005: 146-52 (with an emphasis on mother-martyrs); Walker 2006: 206-45.

<sup>10</sup> For a positive re-evaluation of family relationships in hagiography see Constantinou 2013: 273-84, who emphasises the central and even protagonist role of family in certain hagiographic texts.

There were, therefore, no clear-cut ways for the representation of family relationships. This largely depended on the characteristics of the core plot but also, crucially, on authorial intent. As we shall see, the seeds of John of Damascus' vision of the human family, which originates in and is linked to the heavenly family of God, surface in the *Encomium of St Barbara*. John does not treat the relationship between Barbara and Dioscorus superficially, rendering it in terms of a pagan father's brute violence against his Christian daughter, or reducing it to a bold act of defiance against parental authority when the latter threatens one's beliefs. On the contrary, he shows a remarkable talent for engaging more deeply with the thematic content of the narrative. Departing from what is mostly a stereotypical martyrdom story, he attempts to introduce an explanation for his audience of the dramatic breach in the relationship between father and daughter and incorporate into the homily his own theological vision of the family and the destination of the Christian believer. The following analysis will show how John eventually develops a distinct approach to the family which combines a readily comprehensible familial idiom with a more theoretical input, turning it into an instrument of pastoral and theological instruction.<sup>11</sup>

The story of Barbara's martyrdom is one of grim family violence. The theme of parental aggressiveness is predominant in an unusual cycle of hagiographies, to which Barbara's *passion* also belongs, in which a young Christian woman becomes victim of her pagan father's fierce opposition to her novel beliefs. The father's outbursts of violence in such stories as the *Passion of St Christine* and the *Passion of St Irene* are not merely literary elements added for dramatic effect; they propel the narrative by initiating a cycle of interrogation and torture, and more important still, they reflect a genuine moral unease at the

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<sup>11</sup> For a good example of how family representations in hagiography could be used for theological purposes see Howard 2013, who demonstrates in his study of the *Life of Macrina* how Gregory of Nyssa's 'family portrait illustrated a model of Nicene orthodoxy', *ibid.* 104.

subversion of family life.<sup>12</sup> But whereas in the latter two the female martyr survives the persecution of her father, in Barbara's *martyrium* it is the father who, apart from denouncing his daughter to the local governor, also carries out her death sentence in a narrative thus marked by the cyclical repetition of parental punishment. John picks up the tension between the young Christian convert and her evil-minded father at various points in the *Encomium of St Barbara* to create a rendering of the story that foregrounds the moral contrast between father and daughter, accentuates the father's irrational behaviour and the shattering of the family ties, and connects the martyr to the spiritual lineage of Eve and Mary.

Through a carefully calculated introduction that contrasts Barbara's fervent piety with her pagan father's error, John immediately predisposes his audience for the vast gulf that separates the two. Dioscorus is a wealthy aristocrat and a frenzied (ἐμμονής) champion of the lifeless idols.<sup>13</sup> His flawed character and misguided zeal, dismissed by John not only verbally but also stylistically in a brief sentence, is followed by a stream of attributes and virtues characteristic of Barbara's life of devotion. The young woman is distinguished for her extraordinary beauty and the dignity of her behaviour.<sup>14</sup> The splendour of the virgin's physical appearance is in fact such that leads Dioscorus to confine her to a tower away from the eyes of people.<sup>15</sup> Here the contrast between the preacher's eloquent praise of the martyr's beauty, a complement to physical and spiritual purity in martyr literature,<sup>16</sup> and her father's measures to conceal it functions as an early sign of Dioscorus' moral depravity, all the more since the beauty he absurdly tried to protect would later suffer the consequences of the

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<sup>12</sup> See *Pass. Christinae* 12.4-6 (BHG 302; edited in Norsa 1912: 316-27), and especially *Pass. Ir.* 52-62; 273-79; 328-332 (BHG 953; edited in Wirth 1892: 116-48). The first discussion of the similarities between the *passions* of Barbara, Christine, and Irene is found in Wirth 1892, who places the stories in a broader literary cycle which he ultimately traces back to the Greek legend of Danae. See further Burchard 1965: 134-7, Philonenko 1968: 110-17, Kraemer 1998: 235-6 for the relation of the three *passions* with the novel of *Joseph and Aseneth*.

<sup>13</sup> *Barb.* 7.3.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.* 7.4-6.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.* 7.6-8.

<sup>16</sup> On hagiographical beauty see Detoraki 2007-9 and *id.* 2017.

tortures he himself inflicted upon Barbara's body. Ironically, it was precisely during her confinement that Barbara cultivated her intimate relationship with God, deepening further her estrangement from her father's religious beliefs.<sup>17</sup> From that point on, John builds progressively a portrait of the saint that, having departed from her external beauty, probes into her inner spirituality, while at the same time it increases even more the distance with the figure of the father. In just a few lines, the essential characteristics of the pursuit of human perfection in Christ as expected from believers are crystallised in the person of Barbara. The ascent in virtue is gradual: the primary prerequisite is the repudiation of the idols and the confession of the holy and consubstantial Trinity.<sup>18</sup> Barbara's spiritual journey, however, did not end there, in a mere confession of faith. She reflected on the immortality of the soul and the life after death, measuring side by side the imperishable goods in the kingdom of heaven and the perils of hell; she desired the same mystical union of the wise virgins with the bridegroom Christ.<sup>19</sup>

What the preacher achieves at the outset of the martyrdom narrative is to situate Barbara and Dioscorus at opposite moral poles. John reserves for them the roles of hero and anti-hero, and so the *passion* stops being simply a story of the confrontation between a pagan and a Christian, and is automatically converted into an account that in its essence revolves around the derailed relationship between a father and his daughter. A second implication, one which is particularly revealing about John's vision of the family, is that the conflicting values on which their relationship is based do not stem in principle from differences in individual character or from the transgression of social conventions but originate in their divergent religious beliefs. A case in point is Barbara's rejection of her father's proposal to marry. Although resistance to marriage and the outrage caused by the opposition to the family will is

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<sup>17</sup> *Barb.* 7.9-11.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.* 7.12-5.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.* 7.15-24.

a common theme in female martyr narratives, Barbara's passionate refusal does not figure as an issue of contention between her and Dioscorus.<sup>20</sup>

The events of Barbara's martyrdom are rather understood as part of the broader question of one's interior disposition to be freed from sin, as becomes obvious in a passage preceding the main narrative in which John, anticipating Dioscorus' behaviour, distinguishes the martyr from that category of people who have welcomed the darkness of idolatry instead of the cleansing fire of the Spirit and the inspired message of the Apostles: 'But not such was the most holy and pure soul of the honourable martyr Barbara, who instead received the light of faith.'<sup>21</sup> By contrast, idol-worship amounts to 'imprudence' (ἀφροσύνην) and 'insanity' (παράνοιαν) and converts Dioscorus into a man nurtured in impiety and a defender of darkness.<sup>22</sup>

Tacitly strengthening the idea that this is a story about a family under the strain of religious dissent as much as it is about martyrdom, the preacher generalises from the case of the two protagonists to provide an exemplary parallel of Christian attitude, when principles of faith are at stake in the family context. This is none other than Abraham himself, who was the first to renounce the idolatrous paternal customs:

Καὶ μάρτυς Ἀβραάμ ὁ πατριάρχης, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο τῶν ἐθνῶν πατὴρ τῶν τὴν αὐτοῦ πίστιν ἐζηλωκότων κληθεὶς, πρῶτος πατρικῆς ἀποφοιτήσας πολυθεΐας καὶ ἀθεότητος. Ὦντως πεπλήρωται καὶ ἐν τούτῳ τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἡ θεία πρόρρησις, θυγατέρα καὶ νύμφην κατὰ πατρός καὶ μητρός καὶ πενθερᾶς ἐξανιστᾷσα, τὰ νέα καὶ πρόσφατα τοῖς παλαιοῖς καὶ ληρώδεσι καὶ διχοτομοῦσα τὸ χεῖρον ἀπὸ τοῦ κρείττονος.<sup>23</sup>

And the patriarch Abraham is witness, and it was for this reason that he was called the father of all the nations that showed a zeal for his faith, for he first abandoned polytheism and godlessness. In that case, too, the divine prophecy of our Saviour Jesus Christ was truly fulfilled, when he said that he would turn a

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<sup>20</sup> *ibid.* 8.1-12. Contrast the accounts of St Marina of Antioch (BHG 1165) and St Thecla (BHG 1717).

<sup>21</sup> *Barb.* 6.1-8.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.* 8.26; 9.13.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.* 9.23-9. Here John uses Matthew 10:35 to strengthen his point on the rejection of family when that is considered necessary.

daughter and a maiden against her father and her mother and her mother-in-law, the young against the old and foolish, and that he would separate the evil from the good.

The homily's shift of attention to Abraham is deliberately positioned immediately after Dioscorus' outburst at Barbara's profession of her Christian faith, already foreshadowed in the contrasting portrayal of the two, and emphasises the rupture in family ties caused by faithlessness. It also serves to remind the faithful that the example of Barbara was not detached from their own reality. As John reassures his audience, 'many a time a root of profanity produces fruits of piety / ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐκ δυσσεβοῦς ῥίζης καρπὸς πολλάκις εὐσεβείας ἀναδίδοται'<sup>24</sup> For that to happen, the young martyr had to confront her father. She had to separate the evil from the good, following the Gospel command not to choose one's family over God, which, however, concerned every Christian who sought a virtuous life but was prevented from doing so by his family.<sup>25</sup>

The consequences of impiety in the family are detrimental both to the pious Christian, who is led down the path of suffering, and the unbeliever. Whereas until now Dioscorus' obsession with the idols was described as affecting the internal condition of his soul, now its effects are externalised when he draws his sword to strike his only-daughter, thus disrupting the familial order. The adjective μονογενές ('only-born') used of Barbara stresses the inconceivable nature of Dioscorus' act, which is further emphasised by a carefully coordinated hyperbaton in which μονογενές and θυγάτριον, the very two words that should determine his identity as father, enclose the verb κατασφάζαι ('cut down', emphatic form of σφάζω).<sup>26</sup> To the eyes of the preacher and the audience Dioscorus 'had crossed the limits of piety and nature together.'<sup>27</sup> John here makes a bold addition to Dioscorus' portrait, one that

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<sup>24</sup> *Barb.* 9.22.

<sup>25</sup> Note particularly the relevance of Mt 10:35 to the monastic renunciation of family ties; cf. Vuolanto 2015: 125-6. Abraham is also invoked by Christian exegetes as a scriptural precedent for the ascetic rejection of ordinary life; see Clark 1999: 108-10.

<sup>26</sup> *Barb.* 9.18.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.* 9.18-9: 'ὁ τῆς εὐσεβείας ὁμοῦ καὶ τῆς φύσεως τοὺς ὅρους ἐκβεβηκώς'.

associates estrangement from God with the transcendence of the boundaries of human conduct. Dioscorus' characterisation is gradually built on dehumanising terms: he is 'more insensitive than stone' and his soul is 'inhuman'.<sup>28</sup> What started as a problem of conflicting religious worldviews, soon turns into a question of sharing the same human nature and, inevitably, the same family ties: eventually, Dioscorus captures Barbara, imprisons her, and presents her to the authorities to be further interrogated.<sup>29</sup>

After an interval during which Barbara suffers torture at the hands of the local governor (10.14-14.24), John returns to the indifference of the father in sight of his daughter's suffering, and pursues further the idea of boundary crossing by comparing animal behaviour to that of the father:

Ἀλλά μοι καὶ τοῦ τῆς μακαρίας κατὰ μὲν σάρκα γεννήτορος, ἀλλότριον δὲ τοῦ εὐσεβοῦς κατὰ πνεῦμα φρονήματος τὸ ἀπάνθρωπον καὶ ἐκτεθριωμένον τοῦ τρόπου καὶ πόρρω τῆς πατρικῆς διαθέσεως θαυμάζειν ἐπέρχεται. Ὅντως καὶ αὐτὰ τὰ ἄλογα θηρία, ἄσπλαγχνε πάτερ, τῇ ὠμότητι καὶ τῇ ἀπανθρωπῷ ὑπερήλασας. Ἐκεῖνα γὰρ τὰ ἔγγονα αὐτῶν, ὅφ' ὅτου θεωροῦνται βλαπτόμενα, μέχρι θανάτου αὐτῶν ὑπερμάχονται, σὺ δὲ τὸ ἴδιον καὶ μονογενὲς θυγάτριον ὡς ἐν μακέλλῳ ἀφειδῶς τὰ γυναικεῖα γαλακτοφόρα μέλη ξίφεσιν θεώμενος ἐκκοπτόμενα οὐδὲ κἂν τὴν ὕβριν ἠδέσθης τῆς φύσεως οὐδὲ πρὸς τὰς τοσαύτας πληγὰς ἐκάμωθης, ὡς τὴν καρδίαν λιθώδης τε καὶ ἀναίσθητος.<sup>30</sup>

But also I cannot help but marvel at the inhuman and animal-like behaviour and unfatherly disposition of him who is the parent of the blessed one by blood, yet is a stranger to her pious sentiments in spirit. You truly surpassed, merciless father, the irrational beasts themselves in atrociousness and cruelty. For when they see their offspring being hurt, they defend them until death. But you, even when you saw the milk-bearing breasts of your own only-born daughter being pitilessly cut off with swords as if in a meat-market, were neither ashamed of the insult to her nature nor moved by her many wounds, you that are senseless and have a heart of stone.

Although a good part of Barbara's story is concerned with her persecution by the governor, the preacher here deliberately keeps Dioscorus within sight of his audience. John

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.* 10.5: 'ὁ λίθων ἀναισθητότερος' (and further 10.6-7: 'τῇ πωρώσει ἀπελιθοῦτο' and 'εἰς πετρώδη ἀντιτυπίαν μετήγετο' – notice the triple emphasis on the moral and spiritual 'petrification' of Dioscorus). *ibid.* 10.8: 'τῆς ψυχῆς τὸ σκληρὸν καὶ ἀπάνθρωπον'.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.* 10.9-13.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.* 15.1-10.



resets the narrative's focus on the latter's attitude as father and redirects attention to the family drama that is being played out, this time through a comparison which is much unlike the one that preceded between Barbara and Abraham. The parallels for Dioscorus' heartless behaviour are rather sought in the animal kingdom, but even irrational beings are found to be more willing to sacrifice themselves to defend their offspring. John preserves the same pattern of explaining the alteration of the father's character as earlier in the homily. Again, the discrepancy of the two protagonists' religious sentiment is highlighted. Their relationship is converted simply into one of blood (κατά μὲν σάρκα), since Dioscorus does not fulfil the one condition that preserves one's human nature as well as the integrity of family life: a pious spirit (τοῦ εὐσεβοῦς [...] φρονήματος). Dioscorus' spiritual mortification transforms him into an animal-like being which rejects the acceptable patterns of paternal behaviour. In fact, he is a 'merciless father' with a 'heart of stone' (ὁ τὴν καρδίαν λιθώδης), who is even inferior in nature and feeling to the wild animals. Ultimately, he and others like him, who are 'intoxicated with the folly of impiety', become 'equal to the man-slaying demons'.<sup>31</sup> Having fallen into a state of utter degradation, Dioscorus stepped outside human nature (ἔξω [...] τῆς φύσεως) to such an extent that the preacher renders the loss of his humanity synonymous to his demonisation.<sup>32</sup> The progression from a normal to an extra- or super-natural state is not necessarily a symptom of the fallen human. Barbara and the martyrs also became 'above nature' and were raised 'above the human condition' but in a completely opposite direction: through the endowments of the Holy Spirit (πνεύματι).<sup>33</sup>

John's interpolated comments on the changing fortunes of the martyr's relationship with her father, initiated at the beginning and continued half way through the martyrdom narrative, conclude in a cyclical fashion with a final intervention, when Dioscorus carries out her death

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<sup>31</sup> *ibid.* 15.11; 15.20.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.* 15.17-8.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.* 15.12-4; 15.18-9.

sentence. Barbara's execution also signals Dioscorus' own end, which is worthy of his 'unmerciful inhumanity'.<sup>34</sup> The strike of a thunder causes his immediate death, and in this way he meets the fate of Judas, handing himself to the fire of the gehenna.<sup>35</sup> John draws here a potent analogy which deals the final blow to Dioscorus' portrait by completing the dehumanisation of the father's figure as a consequence of his denial of Christ. Just as Judas was led astray from the way to salvation that was opened to him by Christ, so too Dioscorus rejected the 'path of life' that was revealed to him by Barbara.<sup>36</sup> In the chapter *On providence* from his treatise *On the Orthodox Faith*, John writes the following on the abandonment by God of the people who failed to heed his call:

Now, there are two kinds of abandonment, for there is one by dispensation which is for our instruction and there is another which is absolute rejection. [...] On the other hand, there is absolute abandonment, when God has done everything for a man's salvation, yet the man of his own accord remains obdurate and uncured, or rather, incorrigible, and is then given over to absolute perdition, like Judas. May God spare and deliver us from this sort of abandonment.<sup>37</sup>

Dioscorus, like Judas, became victim of the 'absolute perdition' for his decision to betray and cruelly turn against the person who was able to lead him to God. John's moral marginalisation and exemplary condemnation of the figure of the father is complemented by the definitive severance of the natural family bonds between Barbara and Dioscorus. His unexpected death was required in order that he may no longer be recognised as the father of the martyr.<sup>38</sup> Even his own household (οἶκος) rejects his presence.<sup>39</sup> These reactions of the internal spectators of Barbara's martyrial end incite the listeners of John's sermon to ostracise

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<sup>34</sup> *ibid.* 18.18.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.* 18.20-23.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. *ibid.* 9.19-20.

<sup>37</sup> *Expos.* 43.53-61 (trans. Chase 1958: 262).

<sup>38</sup> *Barb.* 18.23-4: for you no longer deserved to live on, lest people point at you with their finger and call you father of the martyr (οὐ γὰρ ἔτι ἐπιβιώναι ἐτύγχανες ἅγιος, ἵνα μὴ δακτυλοδεικτούμενος πατήρ κληθῆναι τῆς μάρτυρος).

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.* 18.25.

in their own turn Dioscorus. The preacher thus achieves to create a repugnant paternal anti-model which amplifies the consequences of a family life deprived of Christian values.

The pious Barbara, by contrast, emerges as a freed woman against the odds of her background. The quest for God often requires the individual to sever his links with his close environment. But in exchange for this sacrifice the devout Christian becomes member of a timeless family. The preacher describes Eve, the foremother (προμήτωρ) of humankind, as boasting in having had a daughter (θυγάτριον κτησαμένη) who victoriously opposed the enemy that had once defeated her.<sup>40</sup> Barbara's courage represents the correction of Eve's acts and the cancellation of the power of the devil, and embodies the ideal of liberation from sin through the virtue of piety and purity of faith.<sup>41</sup> Her martyrdom, while being the dreadful outcome of the hatred of her biological father, is the reason for the rejoicing of the mother to whom humanity traces its ancestry. In a way, Eve's motherhood compensates for the absence of a maternal figure from the hagiographical account of St Barbara and for the lack of a parental figure after the death of Dioscorus.<sup>42</sup> Yet it is the spiritual motherhood of Mary, the 'God-bearer and foremother' (θεοτόκος καὶ προμήτωρ), which leads Barbara to her encounter with God.<sup>43</sup> The Theotokos, as another foremother who 'reigns over all men and women, and all things heavenly and earthly' for being the Mother of God (θεομήτωρ),

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<sup>40</sup> *ibid.* 20.6-9.

<sup>41</sup> In a troparion to St Barbara written by the hymnographer St Kassia (ninth century), Barbara is also presented as humiliating the 'enemy' that had once manipulated the 'foremother' Eve; cf. Silvas 2006: 29. Barbara's sacrifice is important as a symbol of the fight not just of Christians but of the female sex in particular against the yoke of sin. Note John's earlier exclamation: 'How beautified and exalted is the female sex, and encouraged and exhorted to bravery by your struggles!' (*Barb.* 20.4-6). On the theme of Eve's sin, see Silvas 2006 and Riehle 2014:246-53.

<sup>42</sup> Dioscorus and Eve are also placed side by side as 'parents' of Barbara earlier in the homily: 'O girl that spurned your father's imprudence and insanity with divine prudence! O daughter that recalled the naivety and deceit of the foremother Eve with firm spirit' ('Ὁ κόρης συνέσει θεία τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς μυκτηρισίας ἀφροσύνην τε καὶ παράνοϊαν. Ὡ θυγατὶς τὴν τῆς προμήτορος Εὕας εὐήθειαν καὶ ἀπάτην τῷ στερόῳ τοῦ φρονήματος ἀνακαλεσαμένης.); *Barb.* 8.26-30.

<sup>43</sup> *Barb.* 20.10.

embraces the martyr and sits her near her, granting her the honour of *parrhesia* and presenting her before the ‘royal throne’, before Christ himself.<sup>44</sup>

Mary’s appearance is also related to the fact that Barbara confronted the devil ‘in a young woman’s flesh’; the martyr is proof of Mary’s restoration of the female sex from its sinful state after Eve’s temptation.<sup>45</sup> Most interestingly, however, the preacher places a particular emphasis on the role of Eve and Mary as mothers, who react to the martyr’s heroism, the first taking delight and pride in her daughter’s achievements (ἐγκαυχᾶται καὶ γέγηθεν), the second welcoming her in heaven. Eve does not simply represent the state of ancestral sin which the saint successfully overcomes, but is a more human figure that expresses feelings of motherly gratitude to Barbara. Similarly, to Mary’s characterisations as ‘God-bearer’ and ‘Mother of God’ John adds that of the ‘foremother’ which extends her motherhood to all humans and therefore to Barbara too. In fact, it is the Theotokos the one who acknowledges Barbara’s victory over the adversary and her saintly virtues, and receives her in her arms, rather than Christ, despite the fact that moments before her execution he addresses her saying: ‘Come, my blessed athlete, rest in the chambers of my Father who is in heaven.’<sup>46</sup>

John’s interest in underlining the motherhood of Mary and Eve is evocative of the family language he adopts in the context of theology and soteriology, according to which Christians are members of the heavenly family of God. The concept of God’s fatherhood and the participation of humans to it after baptism was of course a complex subject, and nothing close to an equally formulated creed exists in the *Encomium of St Barbara*. Nevertheless, the culmination of the narrative with the maternal care of Mary and Eve reveals a tendency in John’s teaching to allude to the intimacy with God, Mary or the saints that the believer who strives for perfection can experience. This intimacy is expressed in family terms, reflecting,

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<sup>44</sup> *ibid.* 20.9-18.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.* 20.13.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.* 17.37-8.

in fact, John's real belief in the existence of a divine family. And even though Barbara's new family ties are not based on the prototypical familial relationship between God and the Christians as adopted children, it is because the preacher experiments with different forms of transmitting the same message to his audience. As a motherless female character whose misfortunes are caused by her father, Barbara is rewarded with the admiration of two mother figures, who recognise the martyr's achievement to defeat the devil while being only a woman, and provide her with the motherly comfort she had never received. Similarly, the figure of God as father does not take the place of Dioscorus; rather the preacher shows a preference for another type of imagery common in female hagiographies which depicts the virgin martyr's mystical union with the Bridegroom.<sup>47</sup>

The notion of a celestial family which constitutes the destination of the pious Christian is not a mere side note to Barbara's noble martyrdom. On the contrary, it is the climax of a detailed examination of a life inspired by Christian principles or deprived of them on the individual and family level. The worshippers who listened to the panegyric on Barbara were able to draw a lesson about an issue that concerned a large portion of the congregation, a family's religious devotion, and John made sure that this aspect of the saint's life did not go unnoticed. He centred his description on the break of family unity through the characters' irreconcilable attitudes towards God on account of which the devout martyr passed beyond the human condition, while her faithless father was reduced to an unrecognisable state of inhumanity. Dioscorus' faithlessness and the alteration of his human nature become for the faithful a warning for the consequences of impiety in their relationships with their earthly families. On the other hand, Barbara serves as the model on which personal and family life should be built in order to enjoy the spiritual rewards that await the faithful in the family of God. Such instruction demonstrates John of Damascus' particular viewpoint on the concept

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<sup>47</sup> *ibid.* 22.21-9.

of family which combines elements of his theoretical thought with the practical case provided by the *passion* narrative, and a talent for transforming his homilies into a discourse with a focus on providing models for imitation but also a clear concern for the salvation of the individual and his communion with the divine.

### *Monasticism*

John did not limit himself to supplying an unmatched display of faith in the person of Barbara. In the course of the homily Barbara's devotion is given a concrete content and is linked to the expectation of heavenly rewards. The preacher condenses the essence of the saint's pious achievements in repeated salutations:

Σὺ δέ μοι, ὦ Χριστοῦ ἀμνὰς καὶ περιστερὰ καὶ νύμφη καὶ πᾶν εἴ τι οὖν ὄνομα καλὸν καὶ χαρίεν καὶ τίμιον, χαῖρε, γεννικῶς τῶν ἀγώνων διαδραμοῦσα τὸν δίαυλον. Χαῖρε, τῶν ἄθλων ἐπάξια κομισαμένη τὰ ἔπαθλα. Χαῖρε, ἥπερ πολλὰ τὰ βραβεῖα ὑπὲρ πολλῶν τῶν ἀγωνισμάτων ὀφείλεται. Χαῖρε, ἡ τῶν ἐμπαθῶν τῆς σαρκὸς σκιρτημάτων λογισμῷ ἐπικρατήσασα σώφρωνι. Χαῖρε, ἡ τὰς τοῦ σώματος αἰσθήσεις ἐν ἡλικίας νεότητι πρεσβυτικῶς καὶ ἐμφρόνως παιδαγωγήσασα. Χαῖρε, ἡ τὴν παρθενίαν καὶ πρὸ τοῦ μαρτυρίου φυλάξαι τῷ Χριστῷ καθυποσχομένη ἄχραντον καὶ ἀμίαντον. Χαῖρε, ἡ τὸ σωματικὸν κάλλος τοῖς πάθεσι μὴ ῥυπώσασα, ἀλλ' ἀνέπαφον τῷ ποιητῇ ἀναθεῖσα καὶ παραστήσασα. Χαῖρε, ἡ ἐν τῷ πύργῳ ὡς ἐν ἀσφαλεῖ φρουρίῳ καὶ παρθένων εὐκτηρίῳ πυκνὰς καὶ ἀκραιφνεῖς τῷ Θεῷ προσευχὰς ἀναπέμπουσα καὶ τῇ ἀπλανεῖ τῶν ὄντων θεωρίᾳ πρὸς τὸν ποιητὴν ἀναχθεῖσα καὶ τοῦ μόνου ὄντως καλοῦ τε καὶ ἐραστοῦ ἀπλήστως κατατρυφήσασα.

Χαῖρε, ἡ ἐν τῷ τοῦ σωματικοῦ ῥύπου καθαρτηρίῳ λουτρῷ συμβολικῶς τὴν τριάδα διὰ τῆς τῶν θυρίδων τριπλῆς φωταγωγίας ἐξεικονίσασα καὶ τὸ τῇ τριττῇ φωτοδοσίᾳ ψυχῶν μυστικὸν καὶ σωτήριον τυπικῶς διαγράψασα βάπτισμα. Χαῖρε, ἡ εὐθὺς τρανότατα τὴν τῆς ὁμοουσίου τριάδος πίστιν θεολογικῶς διομολογήσασα στόματι. Χαῖρε, ἡ τὸν ἕνα τῆς ἀγίας τριάδος διὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν ἐνανθρωπήσαντα σωτηρίαν ἐν παρρησίᾳ κηρύξασα. Χαῖρε, ἡ πλοῦτον καὶ τρυφὴν καὶ σιμῶν νημάτων ὑφάσματα καὶ λίθων πολυτιμῶν καὶ μαργαρίτων χρυσοκολλήτων καὶ πᾶσαν σωματικὴν εὐκοσμίαν καὶ ὠραιότητα καὶ τῶν ἐπιγείων τερπνοτήτων ἀπόλαυσιν διαπτύσασα καὶ τούτων ἀνταλλαξαμένη αἰῶνια ἀγαθὰ καὶ ἀκήρατα, τὰ ὁμμάτων ὄρασιν καὶ ὧτων ἀκοὴν καὶ πᾶσαν αἴσθησίν τε καὶ νόησιν ὑπεραίροντα. Χαῖρε, ἡ τὸ τῆς ἡλικίας τρυφερὸν καὶ τὸ τοῦ θήλεως ἀσθενὲς γεννικῶς καὶ ἀνδρικῶς στερεώσασα συντόνῳ φρονήματι. Χαῖρε, ἡ πρὸς τοὺς τῶν κολάσεων αἰκισμοὺς μὴ δειλανδρήσασα, θαρσαλέως δὲ μᾶλλον ἐαυτὴν ἐπιδουῖσα παντοίοις βασανιστηρίων εἶδεσι καὶ στρεβλώσεσι. Χαῖρε, ἡ ἐν

σαρκὶ διατρίβουσα Χριστοῦ τὴν δόξαν ἰδεῖν ἡξιωμένη, ὡς ἐν τῷ ὄρει τῶν μαθητῶν οἱ πρόκριτοι σὺν Ἡλίᾳ καὶ Μωσῇ τεθεαμένοι προσηκόντως ἐμακαρίσθησαν. Χαῖρε, ἡ τῶν μαστίγων τὰς ἀλγηδόνας καὶ σιδήρων καταξέσεις καὶ τραχυτάτων τριχίνων ὑφασμάτων ἐκτρίψεις καὶ αἱμάτων ῥοὰς καὶ πυρὸς φλογισμοὺς καὶ μελῶν ἐκτομὰς καὶ γυμνὴν ἐκπόμπευσιν καὶ κεφαλῆς καὶ ζωῆς ἀφαίρεσιν διὰ Χριστὸν ὑπομείνασα, ἵνα τὸ σῶμα λοιπὸν λάβῃς ἀθάνατον, ἀφθαρσίας μαρμαρυγὰς ἀπαστράπτων καὶ δόξης ἡμφιεσμένον στολὴν ἄφραστον καὶ ἀνεκλάλητον.<sup>48</sup>

But you, Christ's lamb, and dove, and bride, and whatever good and graceful and honourable appellation there is, hail, for you nobly ran through the pathway of struggle. Hail, for you worthily gained the prize of your contests. Hail, you to whom many rewards are owed for your many ordeals. Hail, you who prevailed over the surge of the passions of the flesh with sound reason. Hail, you who trained the senses of your body with elderly prudence at a young age. Hail, you who promised to preserve your virginity immaculate and undefiled even before your martyrdom. Hail, you who did not stain your bodily beauty with passions, but offered and presented it untouched to your creator. Hail, you who, living in the tower as if in a safe keep and maidens' monastery, offered up frequent and pure prayers to God, and were led up to the creator through the unerring contemplation of beings, and insatiately delighted in him who is the only truly benevolent and beloved.

Hail, you who symbolically depicted the Trinity by the triple light of the windows in the bathhouse that purifies the dirt of the body, and by way of signs represented the mystical and salvific baptism of the soul through the triple illumination. Hail, you who straightaway professed with the greatest clarity the faith to the consubstantial Trinity with your theological mouth. Hail, you who proclaimed with freedom of speech the one of the Holy Trinity who became incarnate for our salvation. Hail, you who scorned wealth, luxury, silk garments, precious stones, pearls soldered with gold, and all bodily adornment and beauty, and the joy of earthly pleasures, and exchanged them with noble and undefiled goods, which lie beyond the seeing of the eyes and the hearing of the ears and every sense and reason. Hail, you who nobly and bravely strengthened the tenderness of your age and the weakness of your female nature with firm spirit. Hail, you who were not cowardly in face of the pain of the tortures, but rather courageously handed yourself to all kinds of punishment and perversity. Hail, you who, though living in flesh, were deemed worthy of seeing Christ's glory, like the chosen disciples who were befittingly deemed blessed when they gazed at him with Elijah and Moses on the mount. Hail, you who endured for Christ the wounds of the whip, the floggings of iron tools, the friction of rough garments, the shedding of blood, the heat of fire, the mutilation of your limbs, the naked parading, and the taking away of your head and life, in order to receive thereafter an immortal body, one that shines with the light of incorruptibility and is dressed with the unspeakable and ineffable robe of glory.

From an early stage Barbara showed a natural inclination towards a life devoted to God. It was a promise she had made expressly (καθυποσχομένη), long before she faced the dilemma of siding with the pagan gods or choosing martyrdom (καὶ πρὸ τοῦ μαρτυρίου), when she

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<sup>48</sup> *Barb.* 19.1-38.

was young (ἐν ἡλικίας νεότητι) and used to turn her place of seclusion into a house of prayer (εὐκτηρίῳ), until the day she decided to come out and challenge her father. The pursuit of personal virtue, which the preacher also progressively advances as an endeavour on the family level, emphasising the ensuing consequences if this is not the case, aimed at a specific bodily and spiritual state, and at one's access to the heavenly realm. Barbara reined the senses and passions of the flesh, embraced virginity, dedicated herself to prayer, had theological insight, and renounced every kind of wealth and earthly pleasure. After enduring the suffering of torture, she was granted the privilege to see Christ while still in this world, until she was finally dressed in the light of Christ's glory upon her death. What is particularly notable about this summary of Barbara's virtues is that, despite being, after all, a young woman living 'in the world', her way of life was permeated by principles resembling those of a monastic lifestyle. John points to a very concrete path towards the transformation of oneself and the search for God, one that promotes the virtues best exemplified in the life of the solitaries and is represented in detail in his *Encomium of St John Chrysostom*. Before moving on, one point should immediately be stressed: it is important to be able to make the distinction between, on the one hand, monasticism, and the ideals of monasticism, on the other, in John's thought and discourse. The latter are not the duty and privilege only of monastics, but, as the example of Barbara proves, can and should also define the lives of common people.

Read through the filter of the attainable monastic ideal, the *Encomium of St John Chrysostom* is in many ways unsurprising. As an exposition of the monastic lifestyle, it naturally contains the wide array of admirable practices and virtues to which the followers of that distinct path aspired: withdrawal from society, a vigorous physical and spiritual life, purity of body and heart, and the highest of all, the viewing of God. Seen from a broader perspective, it reproduces succinctly and with unmistakable confidence the monastic and



ascetic discourse distilled into the late antique patristic literature and present in a long literary tradition from the *Life of Anthony* and the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, to the various monastic histories and John Climacus' magnificent *Ladder of Divine Ascent*.<sup>49</sup> As a piece of hagiography and, hence, as an exhortation to *imitatio*, the encomium is also little different from the rest of the hagiographic accounts. John Chrysostom is represented as a model of virtue that is to be emulated in the same way that he imitated the example Christ. He is unquestionable proof of the attainment of personal perfection through the embracement of the values crystallised into monasticism over the centuries.

Yet as much as it is unsurprising as a hagiographic text with strong monastic resonances, the homily is atypical in terms of its subject's treatment. Hagiographies of monastics abounded both before and after John of Damascus' time. However, John Chrysostom's monastic vocation constituted only part of his identity, and as such, that is, as one component of his personality among many, was treated in pre-Damascenean biographic and hagiographic accounts. John Damascene's encomium, while not being a monastic hagiography – besides, how could it be, since other aspects of his life could not, and are not, neglected – has a distinctive monastic flavour. Parallels for the praise of the monastic ideals of people who did not devote themselves partially or entirely to a life in the monastery or the wilderness can easily be found in the writings of the fourth- and fifth century writers.<sup>50</sup> But contrary to these texts, in which the discourse of ascetic devotion complements the life account of the praised person, in the *Encomium of St John Chrysostom* the reverse happens, and the cultivation by the saint of the ideals of the solitary life displaces to a great extent the other events of his life.

This peculiarity of the Damascene's encomium is partly rooted in the projection of his own experience as a monk into the homily, as shall be argued in chapter five. However, to

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<sup>49</sup> On a useful review of monastic literature see Harmless 2008. Standard studies of late antique monasticism include Chitty 1966; Brown 1988 (esp. p. 210-338); Clark 1999; Harmless 2004.

<sup>50</sup> For a discussion with examples see Vuolanto 2015: 147-76.

account for it persuasively an explanation that takes into consideration the causes and implications of the language of monasticism is necessary. The relationship between monastic discourse in literature and the context surrounding it is relevant here. The question has been addressed by S. A. Harvey who makes a strong case for the historical value of hagiographic narratives in her work on sixth-century Syrian asceticism.<sup>51</sup> By interpreting correctly a saint's portrayal and the author's intention behind the use of traditional *topoi*, she argues, it is possible to arrive at the contemporary historical circumstances, in that case, the relationship between asceticism and society.<sup>52</sup> My aim is to reorient this approach towards a specific regional and chronological context which is eighth-century Palestine, and attempt to read John's *Encomium of St John Chrysostom* as a reflection of the potentially strong presence of the monastic ideal in the life of the local Christian communities, compatible with the monastic activity in Palestine and Jerusalem. The breakdown of the essence of monasticism in Chrysostom's hagiographical account assumes an easily perceivable form for the audience, and echoes, I argue, contemporary historical circumstances in which the monastic community had a leading role. At the same time, it demonstrates how John uses his homilies as a didactic means for imparting the monastic ideal with the aim of providing a guide for the achievement of perfection.

First, it is useful to elucidate the process by which the homily provides the vehicle for an unusual rendering of John Chrysostom's biography which promotes an overwhelmingly monastic-inspired perspective, as well as the types of virtue to which he calls the attention of the audience. The homilist gradually expresses his admiration for the saint's extraordinary flair for teaching the word of God to the multitudes – the reason why he also asks him to help him deliver this encomium.<sup>53</sup> It is at this point, only after about twenty lines into the sermon,

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<sup>51</sup> Harvey 1990.

<sup>52</sup> Harvey 1990: xiii.

<sup>53</sup> *Chrys.* 1.17-23.

that John plunges into a monastic portrayal of Chrysostom. It was neither education nor rhetorical skill, two elements of Chrysostom's personality duly emphasised in previous accounts, that were responsible, at least partly, for the power of his preaching. For John Damascene the explanation is clearly to be found elsewhere: 'ἀρξάμενος γὰρ ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ καὶ σαυτὸν ὄντως Ἱερουσαλήμ κατασκευάσας, πόλιν θεοῦ ζώντος, [...] / For beginning with yourself and truly making yourself into 'Jerusalem', the city of the living God, [...]'.<sup>54</sup> John Chrysostom's achievements had 'himself' as a departure point.

Interior self-formation and its precedence over any other human concern is also emphasised in the *Homily on the Transfiguration*:

For when we bar our senses and become acquainted with ourselves and with God (ἐαυτοῖς καὶ θεῷ συγγενώμεθα) and, having been freed from the changing fortunes of the world outside, enter into ourselves (ἐντὸς ἑαυτῶν γενώμεθα), then we will clearly see the kingdom of God within us (ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ὁψόμεθα). For 'the kingdom' of heaven, that is the kingdom 'of God', 'is within you' (ἐντὸς ὑμῶν ἐστίν), as Jesus our God said.<sup>55</sup>

John refers four times to the concept of the self and the inner processes leading to knowledge of God. Very importantly, he equates one's efforts to discover himself with the checking of the senses and influences of the outside world. The search for the self is thus expressed in terms of a long-established monastic discourse, which requires the elimination of external distractions in favour of a contemplative inner life. Centuries before John of Damascus, Anthony was citing the same words uttered by Jesus regarding the pursuit of the kingdom of God and virtue within oneself: 'For the Lord aforetime had said, "The kingdom of heaven is within you." Wherefore virtue hath need at our hands of willingness alone, since it is in us and is formed from us.'<sup>56</sup> As for Anthony, for John Chrysostom introspection and

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<sup>54</sup> *ibid.* 2.1.

<sup>55</sup> *Transfig.* 10.17-22. Cf. *Lc* 17.21.

<sup>56</sup> Athanasius, *Vita Antonii* 20.15-9.

transformation were also the prerequisites of his conversion ‘into an abode of the divine spirit / εἰς κατοικητήριον θείου πνεύματος’.<sup>57</sup>

It was only at the end of that process that John could preach into the people’s hearts by the grace of God. ‘His voice is gone out into all the earth, and his words to the end of the world’<sup>58</sup> – his sermons reached every corner of the ecumene, because he had laid within himself the deep foundations on which the edifice of all the virtues stands, humility (ταπεινώσεως), and shared in the absolute Wisdom itself (αὐτοσοφίας Χριστοῦ).<sup>59</sup> Eloquence also appears to be a reward for John’s dedication to God, and his words a gift granted by the Word:

Λόγων δὲ πλήρης ὡς λόγου θεραπευτῆς ἐγεγόνεις, δι’ ὧν τὸν θεῖον λόγον καὶ ἐνυπόστατον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ πατὸς διὰ πνεύματος τῷ πατρὶ ἐκήρυξας ὁμοούσιον.<sup>60</sup>

As a servant of the Word, you became filled with words, with which you declared, through the Holy Spirit, that the divine and subsistent Word of God and Father is consubstantial with the Father.

The play of words is significant. John passes from being a servant of the Logos to being a source of ‘λόγοι’ himself. But he is not on the receiving end. He rather uses the gift of eloquence to declare the consubstantiality of the ‘divine Logos’ (θεῖον λόγον) with the Father. His words refer back to him from whom they originate, and so God becomes donor and receiver of John’s preaching in a cyclical pattern in which the saint plays the role of an intermediate agent who first attains and later imparts knowledge of the divine to the community. What this knowledge consists of is concisely explained by the encomiast. It is an understanding of God’s essence, of the Trinitarian hypostases, of Christ’s natures, wills, and

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<sup>57</sup> *Chrys.* 2.2.

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.* 2.5-6, citing Ps. 18.5.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.* 2.7-14.

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.* 3.1-3.

energies.<sup>61</sup> John Chrysostom's preaching efforts were channelled into theologically demanding routes exhibiting a deep interest in the correct formulation of doctrine.

It is worth dwelling for a moment on the three aspects of John Chrysostom's personality which emerge from the introduction to his encomium. The first concerns a type of attitude which is characteristic of monastic culture and sets the tone for much of what follows: the saint's development of an awareness of himself and his sense of humility. However, departing from it, John of Damascus' description of John Chrysostom makes a smooth transition into two further aspects which are the saint's God-given talent for preaching and the theological instruction of the faithful. Presented as a natural sequence of successive stages in the saint's life, preaching and the defence of orthodoxy are joined to Chrysostom's struggles for self-improvement. We are presented with an acknowledgment of the role of the monastic in matters of faith and in the religious life of the community.

The next important step in John Chrysostom's literary portrait is his monastic struggles. The life of the monk denies all physical needs and sacrifices important aspects of one's relation to the world in order to make a connection with the otherworldly. John writes about John Chrysostom:

Μωϋσῆς τις ἄλλος τῷ βίῳ δεδορημένος τὴν Αἰγύπτον καταλελοίπει, τὸν τῇδε βίον καὶ τὰ τοῦ βίου, καὶ τρόπον τινὰ ἔξω τοῦ βίου γενόμενος εἶδε θεὸν ὡς ἐν βάτῳ τῷ τραχεῖ τοῦ βίου ἐκλάμποντα [...]<sup>62</sup>

Like another Moses, with whose life he was gifted, he abandoned Egypt, that is, life in this world and all its affairs, and moved, so to speak, outside life. Through the hardships of his lifestyle, he saw God gleaming in the bush [...]

John Chrysostom represents the essence of monasticism expressed in his 'exodus' from the earthly to the heavenly realm, for which he was rewarded with the gift of viewing God. The Damascene thus draws attention to a life whose gravity lies in one's relationship with

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<sup>61</sup> *ibid.* 3.3-26.

<sup>62</sup> *Chrys.* 9.1-3.

himself and with God. We are told that at the age of thirty, John Chrysostom fled to the monastic life in the mountains near the city of Antioch. What urged him to renounce the comforts of urban life was his desire to harness the appetites of the flesh:

σφριγῶσαν τὴν σάρκα καὶ φλοιδοῦσαν τοῖς πάθεσι καταμαράναι βουλόμενος, ὥς ἂν μὴ τὸ κρεῖττον  
δουλωθεῖ τῷ χείρονι<sup>63</sup>

he wanted to wither his flesh, vigorous as it was and seething with passions, lest the better become enslaved to the worse

That the body should be subservient to the soul was one of the fundamentals of Christian monasticism, which emphasised the significance of self-restraint.<sup>64</sup> John of Damascus is particularly keen to imbue John Chrysostom's monastic portrayal with the ideals of the monastic programme. John attached himself to a Syrian elder who practiced self-control in its highest and most absolute form. After the passing of four years, he pursued the ideal of complete isolation and turned an inhospitable subterranean cave into his home. That became his 'wrestling school and arena of virtue / ἀρετῆς παλαίστραν καὶ κονιστήριον'.<sup>65</sup> The preacher applies the imagery of martyrdom to the life of the ascetic and likens his pursuit of virtue to a martyr's torturous, yet triumphant, confession of faith.<sup>66</sup>

John Chrysostom exemplifies the transformative effects of monasticism. He managed to subdue his passions as if he were fleshless.<sup>67</sup> He practiced abstention from food and drink to the extent that he would neglect to eat properly.<sup>68</sup> The Damascene explains that the mortal flesh is changeable and void and thus the constitution of the body is preserved with food, solid or liquid, and air. But even though the human body was thus made by the Creator, it is

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<sup>63</sup> *ibid.* 8.12-5.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.* 8.15-6: 'the corruption of the body naturally hands control over to the soul / ἡ φθορὰ τοῦ σκηνώματος εἰκότως τῇ ψυχῇ τὴν ἐπικράτειαν δίδωσι'. For an informative account of the development of various values within the monastic culture of late antique Egypt and their scriptural basis, see Burton-Christie 1993.

<sup>65</sup> *Chrys.* 8.22.

<sup>66</sup> On the relation between Christian martyrdom and asceticism, see Malone 1950; Kinnard 2006.

<sup>67</sup> *Chrys.* 5.8; 9.16.

<sup>68</sup> *ibid.* 6.1-2.

God's grace which can also check the domination of physical needs. The saint controls the urges of the body because 'the grace of the Spirit does not yield to the limits of nature / ἡ χάρις τοῦ πνεύματος οὐχ ὑπεῖκει φύσεως ὅροις'.<sup>69</sup> The attitude towards sexual impulses also preoccupies the preacher who celebrates John Chrysostom's purity of soul and mind, since not only did he refrain from sexual activity but knew how to harness his thoughts, so that he was known for his 'dullness' in his relations towards members of the other sex (τὸ πρὸς μίξεις ἡλίθιον).<sup>70</sup> Having emphasised the saint's continence, the homilist corrects himself explaining that 'dullness' is a wrong term to use, since Chrysostom's behaviour is neither irrational nor a natural defect.<sup>71</sup> In his *Dialectica*, John of Damascus writes: 'Licentiousness is a defect of moderation, while dullness is an excess, and the excess is contrary to the defect.'<sup>72</sup> Following Aristotle's notion that the virtuous habit of action is always an intermediate state between the opposed vices of excess and deficiency, the Damascene denies that John Chrysostom exhibits 'dullness', since that would be one of the two undesirable extremes. Instead what he does it to direct his power and desires towards God and not towards the pleasures of life.<sup>73</sup> Once again the significance of the way of life of the monk is emphasised. It is the ascetic practice (ἀσκητικῇ τέχνῃ) that causes the slumber of the passions and leads to impassibility, that is, the cure of excessive desires.<sup>74</sup>

The preacher's description of John Chrysostom's monastic experience is a eulogy to the saint but also a praise of monastic life. Monasticism represents a profound spiritual reality which liberates the soul from its attachment to the body and leads to contemplation of the

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<sup>69</sup> *ibid.* 6.8.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.* 6.12.

<sup>71</sup> *ibid.* 6.12-3.

<sup>72</sup> *Dialect.* 58.35: 'Ἡ μὲν οὖν ἀκολασία ἔλλειψις ἐστὶ τῆς σωφροσύνης, ἡ δὲ ἡλιθιότης ὑπερβολή, ἐναντία δὲ ἡ ὑπερβολὴ τῇ ἐλλείψει'. Cf. *Nic. Ethics* II 6. This strikingly Aristotelian reference provides further confirmation of John Damascene's philosophical education, demonstrating that he did not hesitate to introduce such terminology even in a public sermon. On the influence of Aristotle's *Categories* on *Dialectica*, see Louth 2002: 40-2.

<sup>73</sup> *Chrys.* 6.14.

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.* 6.19. On impassibility or *apatheia* and its prominence as an ascetic ideal, see, for example, Behr 2000: 185-208.

divine. Although practiced by few, monasticism and its ideals were not restricted to the realm of monks. It remained relevant for the majority of Christians and constituted an inextricable part of their lives. This view is encapsulated by John Chrysostom's return from his retirement and his appointment as bishop of Constantinople:

Οὐ γὰρ ὑπὸ μόνδιον κρύπτεσθαι ὅσιον φωστῆρα τοιόνδε, ἐφ' ᾧ τὸ ἄχρονον καὶ αἰδὶον φῶς ἀναπέπαιται, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ λυχνίαν ὑψηλὴν καὶ περίοπτον ἀνατίθεται, ἵν' ὥς ἐξ ἀπόπτου καὶ μεσαιτάτης περιωπῆς σάλπιγξ οἷα χρυσήλατος πάντα περιηγήσῃ τὰ πέρατα.

For it was not possible to hide such a radiant holy man under a bushel, on whom the timeless and everlasting light had rested, but he had to be placed on a tall and visible lampstand, in order that from a conspicuous, middle vantage point, his voice could resound to the ends of the earth like a gold-beaten trumpet.<sup>75</sup>

John of Damascus follows the traditional *topos* of the monk-bishop<sup>76</sup> and emphasises in neo-testamental language the transfer of monasticism's spiritual benefits to the faithful through the bishop's figure.<sup>77</sup>

At this point the narration of the events of John Chrysostom's life stops until it resumes four paragraphs later with the episode of his dispute with the empress Eudoxia.<sup>78</sup> In between the preacher inserts an extensive list of virtues, without any discernible order, which is built, in part, on the use of anaphora, and frequently on long sentences.<sup>79</sup> The resulting literary effect is a sense of fluidity which resembles the numerous virtues that stream forth from the saint. Many of these are presented as part of John Chrysostom's work of edification; others reflect virtues that he himself embodied, although even the former are sometimes explicitly said to have been cultivated by him before he undertook the task of transmitting them to the

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<sup>75</sup> *Chrys.* 10.5-8.

<sup>76</sup> See Sterk 2004, esp. p. 141-160 on John Chrysostom.

<sup>77</sup> Mt 5, 15: οὐδὲ καίουσιν λύχνον καὶ τιθέασιν αὐτὸν ὑπὸ τὸν μόνδιον, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τὴν λυχνίαν, καὶ λάμπει πᾶσιν τοῖς ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ.

<sup>78</sup> *Chrys.* 14.1-15.8.

<sup>79</sup> *ibid.* 10.9-13.21.



faithful.<sup>80</sup> In both cases, John of Damascus' audience was provided with a paradigm of piety, which, furthermore, was imitable, as proven by Chrysostom's own congregations.

Some of the virtues, or vices to be avoided, which the preacher comments on are the following in their order of appearance: John Chrysostom had a 'humble spirit' despite holding a high office; he harnessed 'rage' and 'anger', and acquired 'meekness'; he had 'love' and 'mercy' on others, and preached 'compassion' and 'charity'.<sup>81</sup> He eradicated 'vengeful wrath', 'envy', 'jealousy', and 'censuring'.<sup>82</sup> He extirpated 'grief' and 'mourning' for one's failure to satisfy his pleasures, and taught 'grief' for one's sins, as well as the 'memory of death' instead of 'listlessness'; he taught the 'fear of God', 'prayer', 'hymnody', and the avoidance of excessive sleep and 'sluggishness'.<sup>83</sup> Although the saint became an interpreter and teacher of Scripture gifted with prophetic insight, he did so without 'swell-headedness' and 'vainglory', but considered 'humility' the surest way to God.<sup>84</sup> His look was not 'stern', 'grim' or 'arrogant', but 'gentle'; his words were 'mild', his manners 'graceful' and his smile 'elegant', and he never burst into 'unrestrained laughter'.<sup>85</sup> He rejected every kind of vice from his heart, and became a staunch critic of injustice.<sup>86</sup>

Two remarkable features characterise this long digression on the values that John Chrysostom represented and impressed upon his flock. Moreover, both of them are interrelated. The first is that the context in which many of the virtues and vices mentioned in the homily are best articulated is predominantly monastic. A look at one of the most influential and enduring monastic texts, John Climacus' *Ladder of Divine Ascent* (seventh

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<sup>80</sup> E.g. *Chrys.* 10.13-6: Who was so great in love, from which mercy is born, that until today there are living monuments bearing the signs of his virtue? For mercy was the subject of his every speech, in order that he might lead to the habit of compassion and generosity those who delve into his words. (Τίς ἀγάπην τοσοῦτος, ἐξ ἧς ἔλεος φύεται, οὗ τῆς ἀρετῆς μέχρι νῦν ἔμψυχοι στήλαι τὰ σύμβολα φέρουσι; Λόγος γὰρ ἅπας αὐτῷ ἐλέους ὑπῆρχεν ὑπόθεσις, ὥς εἰς ἔξιν ἐληλακέναι συμπαθείας καὶ μεταδόσεως τοὺς τῶν ἐκείνου ἐπαΐοντας λόγων).

<sup>81</sup> *ibid.* 10.9-14.

<sup>82</sup> *ibid.* 11.1-16.

<sup>83</sup> *ibid.* 11.17-31.

<sup>84</sup> *ibid.* 12.1-13.

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.* 13.1-6.

<sup>86</sup> *ibid.* 13.10-3; 14.1-3.

century), confirms the undisputable prevalence of this kind of morally formative discourse in monastic thought. Some of the titles of the subdivisions of the *Ladder*, a composition of thirty chapters, each of which corresponds to a 'step' in an individual's ascent to God, include: 'On Memory of Death', 'On Joy-Making Mourning', 'On Freedom from Anger and Meekness', 'On Sleep, Prayer, and Psalmody', 'On Humility', 'On Love', etc.<sup>87</sup>

Climacus' feat was an affirmation of the centrality of a mature value system within the monastic tradition which, as noted earlier, was already recorded in a wide array of literary forms, such as hagiographies, monastic histories, and collections of sayings, well before his time. Yet the *Ladder* remains special for being witness to a very powerful tendency in the area of the so-called 'spiritual' literature, still very much alive in the seventh century, namely the fact that 'at regular intervals the need was felt to gather extracts or even whole texts together into anthologies.'<sup>88</sup> Together with the *Pandect* of Antiochus of St Sabas, also from the seventh century, the two works are evidence of the continuous practice of systematising accepted views concerning the cultivation of the spiritual life.<sup>89</sup> The *Pandect*, a collection of 130 chapters (*kephalaia*) on various virtues and vices which combine biblical citations with explanatory remarks, exhibits marked thematic affinities with John's *Ladder*, and reflects many of the elements that complete John of Damascus' portrayal of St John Chrysostom in the excerpt discussed.

In fact, the *Encomium of St John Chrysostom* does not simply employ language that reproduced a lasting monastic worldview. Its second interesting aspect is that it also appears to imitate the spirit and purpose of those monastic anthologies, but now in the limited space of a homily. The preacher creates a dense selection of moral themes, exemplified in the saint's ascetic perfection and teaching, and makes it readily available to his audience. It is as

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<sup>87</sup> John Climacus, *Scala Paradisi* PG 88.631-1164.

<sup>88</sup> Munitiz 2010: 248.

<sup>89</sup> Antiochus, *Pandect* PG 89.1428-1849.

if John had picked up a few of the headings that introduce each section in the anthologies, and strung them together, adding every now and then a brief comment or biblical quotation. A similar practice can be observed in another text that has come down under the name of John of Damascus, although its authorship has not been established. The *On Virtues and Vices* contains a short discussion on the division of the virtues and passions into bodily and spiritual accompanied by long lists that demonstrate both types. Regardless of its attribution, the text manifests the need to offer an easily digestible source of moral teaching. If John Climacus and Antiochus' collections served this purpose in a monastic context, John of Damascus' encomium achieved the same result, on a smaller scale in terms of thematic range and detail, but in favour of a broader and more diverse audience. Besides, even a work such as the *Pandect* is likely to have originated as a series of oral discourses that would take place in a monastic environment.<sup>90</sup>

John, then, converts his homily into a medium for the wider dissemination of the monastic religious and moral universe. It is a process that had already started in the encomium with his emphasis on John Chrysostom's *askēsis* in the desert, and the importance of introspection for approaching God and acquiring theological vision and a talent for instruction. It has been said of John Climacus: 'Specifically, Climacus seeks to form Christians through monastic lifestyles. While Climacus begins the *Ladder* with a list of definitions of the monk, he concludes that list with a definition of the Christian, suggesting that a monk is ultimately just that – a Christian.'<sup>91</sup> Through his homilies, however, John of Damascus was able to impart directly the values of the 'monastic lifestyles' to Christians of various backgrounds. Nevertheless, the question emerges as to how influential this kind of discourse was likely to

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<sup>90</sup> See Papadogiannakis 2016a: 62: 'Two things stand out here: the indications of time here may point to a set of lectures that may have been reworked in the form of the short homilies/*kephalaia* of the *Pandect*. That this may be the case is reinforced by the term διελέχθημεν, which alludes to the literary format of *dialexis*, which can designate a philosophical discourse or a more informal element in the repertoire not of the philosopher but of the epideictic orator.'

<sup>91</sup> Zecher 2015: 18-9.

be, especially with regard to the appeal of the monastic ideal to the personal lives of lay Christians. In order to assess the resonance of John's preaching, it is necessary to resort to alternative sources.

In his discussion of the *Life of Theodore of Edessa*, Sidney Griffith characteristically points out:

As in the case of the *Passion of Michael the Sabaite*, so it is that even a hasty perusal of the *Life of Theodore of Edessa* reveals the high profile in the narrative enjoyed by Jerusalem, the church of the Holy Sepulcher, Mar Saba monastery, and the monastic establishment generally. The text proclaims not only the holiness of these localities and institutions but their spiritual and doctrinal authority, an authority warranted by the quality of the lives of the monks and by the miracles worked, by God's grace, through their intercession.<sup>92</sup>

Although the events of the *life* take place a century after John of Damascus' death, they reflect a reality that had remained unchanged since at least the beginning of the seventh century: the widespread influence of Palestinian monasticism in the Chalcedonian Christian communities of the Near East. This influence took first and foremost the form of an unbending determination to assert the orthodox doctrine against imperially sanctioned 'heretical' movements, other Christian groups in the region, and the newly appeared religion of Islam. The story of Sophronius of Jerusalem, once a monk of the monastery of Theodosius near Bethlehem, and his involvement in the Monothelite controversy has been told many times.<sup>93</sup> A hundred years later, John of Damascus himself set out the arguments against iconoclasm and penned a series of works against the major opponents of Chalcedonian orthodoxy.<sup>94</sup> Monastics would also symbolise the firm resistance to the erring Muslim overlords. Michael the Sabaite, whose Greek *passion* is inserted in the *Life of Theodore of Edessa* (BHG 1744), suffered martyrdom before the authorities in Jerusalem for his defence of the Christian faith, and right before the end of the eighth century, a group of twenty monks

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<sup>92</sup> Griffith 2001b: 160.

<sup>93</sup> On Palestinian monasticism and its role in the Monothelite dispute see Levy-Rubin 2001.

<sup>94</sup> See Louth 2002: 147-79 for an overview as well as the following chapter.

from Mar Saba were killed by Arab pillagers who raided the monastery.<sup>95</sup> Their death was articulated as martyrdom by the author of the *Passion of the Twenty Sabaite Martyrs* (BHG 1200), Stephen of Damascus, who included them in a long listed of persecuted saints.<sup>96</sup>

The ability to stand on the frontline of religious controversies, and even endure physical suffering and death, made monks an uncontested source of spiritual authority on doctrinal matters. But if it was the theological line of monastic communities that most pervasively shaped the orthodoxy of the Chalcedonian flock in early Arab Palestine, it is worth considering how far their influence extended to other aspects of the lives of ordinary people, affecting the areas of religious devotion and Christian values. Examples of monks such as John that came into frequent contact with the laity abound. Recent research has added in particular to our knowledge of monastic perceptions of the laity and interactions between monks and laypeople in seventh-century Egypt and the Near East.<sup>97</sup> Monasticism, of course, had always been a strong element in the society. The evidence for the spheres of its influence, however, becomes scarce as we move progressively into the eighth century, especially with regard to the region of Palestine.

That monks were actively involved in the edification of the faithful on a wide range of pastoral issues is manifested by such works as the collection of *erotapokriseis* of Anastasius of Sinai. Anastasius was a monk and priest with a strong sense of pastoral duty who took part in the religious debates with heterodox groups in Alexandria and preached in his travels in other areas, including Palestine. Anastasius' interests were not exclusively theological. On the contrary, he was very much concerned with the spiritual needs of ordinary people. The nature of his *Questions and Answers* reflects precisely this, being a series of responses to questions that had been addressed to him over the course of the years. As has been

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<sup>95</sup> On Christian neo-martyrs in the early Islamic era, including many monastic figures, see Griffith 1998; Flusin 2011: 215-18; Detoraki 2014: 81-4.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Detoraki 2014: 77-80.

<sup>97</sup> See Marinides 2014, esp. 160-243 and 318-403.

highlighted, ‘the subjects treated by him quite often have nothing specifically clerical or monastic about them’.<sup>98</sup> Among the issues dealt with by Anastasius in his *erotapokriseis* there are many related to marriage and sexual ethics, or to contemporary political problems. Yet a significant number of questions address topics of general spiritual interest. What makes these valuable is that they are particularly eloquent on the nature of the guidance that Anastasius offers his readers which is comparable to the attributes that characterise John Chrysostom in the Damascene’s homily, or the *kephalaia* of the *Pandect* mentioned earlier.

In *QA* 51 Anastasius responds to a question about the need to abstain from meat on fast days, when the Gospel in fact teaches that it is not food what defiles a person. The reason, Anastasius replies, lies in the abstinence from pleasure and in the humbling of one’s soul along with one’s body. But it is noteworthy how he begins his answer: ‘In the case of all fasting, sleeping on the ground, abstaining from wine and refraining from certain foods, piety has two aims [...]’.<sup>99</sup> Although the question is about restrictions on meat consumption, he extends the concept of fasting to other types of food, which he does not name, the drinking of wine, and notably the habit of sleeping on the ground. The similarities between Anastasius’ understanding of fasting and John Chrysostom’s ascetic programme in the Damascenean encomium are obvious, even though the saint’s harsh regimen was certainly not expected to be pursued by lay people. For a moment it seems that Anastasius is trying to invest the practice of fasting with a dose of monastic vigour but *QA* 47 proves otherwise:

QUESTION If somebody has built up a habit of carnal sin and has grown old in it, and he realises in himself that he is now incapable of fasting, or of undertaking penance or sleeping on the floor, or of giving up everything and entering a monastery, how can such person reach salvation when he is now old, and how can he win forgiveness for his sins?

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<sup>98</sup> Munitiz 2011: 12.

<sup>99</sup> All translations of Anastasius’ *Questions and Answers* are taken from Munitiz 2011.

Fasting, ascetic exercise, and the avoidance of comfortable sleep were in fact forms of religious devotion also practiced by the laity. The question concerns cases where an individual is so much afflicted by sin that he lacks the spiritual readiness to accustom himself to such pious habits, or seek redemption in monastic solitude. Clearly, austere practices of control of the body were far from exclusively associated with monasticism.

To the above question Anastasius replies that even the old and weak can keep the divine law, since God's commands were not celibacy, retreat from the world, and fasting, but 'to love God, to love one's neighbour (ἀγαπᾶν τὸν πλησίον), not to be spiteful (μὴ μνησικακεῖν), nor to judge others (μὴ κρίνειν), to be humble (ταπεινοφρονεῖν) and as compassionate as possible (συμπαθεῖν), to pray within our hearts, to support misfortunes, to be mild (πραῦς) and peace-loving (εἰρηνικόν).'<sup>100</sup> Many of the commands to which Anastasius draws attention are fulfilled in the person of St John Chrysostom in the Damascene's encomium. John had infinite love for mankind (ἀγάπην) and was humble (ἐταπεινοῦτο); his words were mild (ἥπιον) and his countenance gentle (μελίχιον).<sup>101</sup> He taught the faithful to show compassion (συμπαθείας), leave behind vengeful wrath (μῆνιν), and not to judge (μὴ κρίνειν).<sup>102</sup> Grief (λύπη) for one's sins was also one of the virtuous acts which he preached.<sup>103</sup> Anastasius' *erotapokriseis* itself also includes a question on the inability to shed tears (κλαυθμός) for our sins, and so it does on the topic of humility.<sup>104</sup> Finally, almost at the beginning of the collection, Anastasius treats the following question: 'And how does one know if Christ has taken up his abode inside one (ἐνοίκησε ἐν αὐτῷ)?'<sup>105</sup> Not coincidentally, John of Damascus also begins the *Encomium of St John Chrysostom* with

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<sup>100</sup> Anastasius, *QA* 47.

<sup>101</sup> *Chrys.* 10.13; 13.1; 13.2; 13.3.

<sup>102</sup> *ibid.* 10.15; 11.1; 11.12.

<sup>103</sup> *ibid.* 11.17-25.

<sup>104</sup> Anastasius, *QA* 49.

<sup>105</sup> Anastasius, *QA* 2.

the saint's focus on himself (ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ) and his conversion into an abode (κατοικητήριον) of the Holy Spirit.<sup>106</sup>

It would be wrong to conclude from these parallels that the *Questions and Answers* and the *Encomium of St John Chrysostom* are preoccupied with the same concerns. The first covers a wide range of topics in the ecclesiastical, moral, and secular spheres to which the author offers practical answers for his readers, while the latter is primarily a saint's hagiography in homiletic form. Yet both share a common perspective regarding the edification of the faithful. First it should be noted that both Anastasius and John of Damascus were priests with pastoral responsibilities in the 'world' but were chiefly characterised by their monastic identity. Their attitude towards their flock was accordingly influenced by their background. When it comes to topics touched upon by both, such as devotional practices and the cultivation of virtues, they employ the same language, one that echoes the principles of monastic living. Of course, love for the neighbour and not judging others were core elements of Christian belief, and were universal for monks/clerics and laity alike. Similarly, extensive fasting and other forms of self-discipline, such as sleeping on the ground, had also come to be part of the religious life of ordinary pious Christians. However, these themes are found side by side with others that were developed and elaborated in monastic-ascetic contexts. The sorrow and tears for the sinful human state, the emphasis on tranquillity and peacefulness, even with regard to external characteristics such as one's tone of voice or facial expression, and, above all, the indwelling of God in the soul, are all elements of a centuries-long monastic discourse which Christian teachers like Antiochus were eventually called to systematise by the seventh century. The incorporation of this kind of discourse into a work like Anastasius' *erotapokriseis* bears witness to the firm conviction that the ideals pursued and experienced in the spiritually enlightened monastic communities were approachable for

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<sup>106</sup> See earlier in this chapter.



everyone, at least to a considerable extent. At the same time, the very format of the *erotapokriseis* clearly implies that this process was reciprocal and that many among the laymen were attracted by a lifestyle which in their opinion was not impossible to adapt to the circumstances of ordinary life. The questions of the collection, posed to a monk with the expectation of answers inspired by his own experience, reflect the preoccupations of a constituent of the society which is aware of and in search for guidance by individuals who embody the monastic ideal.

The *Questions and Answers* demonstrates that Christian communities were exposed to the spiritual pervasiveness of monastic activity and lived with the expectation of receiving the profitable instruction of monks when the opportunity arose. Individuals with monastic formation did not simply represent the reactive capacity of a group that shared the same beliefs and practices to protect itself from heterodox, usually subtle, variations of dogma and worship. Rather, believers also looked to the spiritual authority of monks for moral guidance and advice. If, as has rightly been stressed, Anastasius' collection of *erotapokriseis* reflects the continuous dialogue among Christians on a wide range of matters of everyday concern, in an unstable social reality in which enduring constants needed to be found, it should furthermore be added that the driving force which propelled the redefinition of that reality was largely the monastic world and the values it upheld.<sup>107</sup>

That was also most likely the case with the Chalcedonian communities of the early eighth-century Palestine. Monasteries were often in close proximity to the urban and rural populations of the region, being located along main roads, near villages and holy sites, and within reasonable distance from major cities such as Jerusalem.<sup>108</sup> The hagiographic accounts of great monastic figures provide ample testimony to the involvement of the monasteries in the life of the Palestinian society and the dealings between monks and laymen that resulted

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<sup>107</sup> Papadogiannakis 2016b: 263.

<sup>108</sup> Di Segni 2001: 36. On the archaeology of the Judean Desert monasteries, see Hirschfeld 1992.

from their geographical location.<sup>109</sup> However, the restricted spectrum of the surviving sources does not fully represent the forms of monastic activity, and more importantly, the impact of monasticism on the religious identity and experience of Palestinian Christians in the period after the Arab conquest and during John of Damascus' lifetime.

That is unless we reformulate our expectations of what the existing literature is, in this case the *Encomium of St John Chrysostom*. The encomium is certainly not another set of *erotapokriseis* like Anastasius' in terms of the insight it can provide into the types of matters that connected monks and laymen. But it is also not one of the many hagiographic accounts that existed about John Chrysostom's life. Rather, it is a selective narration of the saint's spiritual and moral achievements preached by a homilist with a monastic background who served as a priest and is known to have had close ties with Jerusalem. It is only when John of Damascus' encomium is approached as an intellectual product with these specific characteristics that it can be appreciated as a testimony to the influence of the monastic ideal on Christian congregations.

In fact, the very act of preaching is one of the most important pieces of evidence for the active role of a monk within a community. Through his duties as a preacher, John of Damascus was in a position to instruct and advise his flock according to his worldview. The literary expression of this power to exercise pastoral influence is well attested in the *Encomium of St John Chrysostom* where John skilfully creates a portrait of the saint which is focused on the cultivation of virtues that figured prominently in the monastic life, as has been discussed in detail. John, himself shaped by the discourse and practices of monasticism, dedicated himself to imparting the principles of the monastic ideal to his audience. Similarly, like the faithful who approached Anastasius with questions regarding their spiritual search, John modified Chrysostom's hagiographic portrait not only because he wanted to 'catechise'

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<sup>109</sup> Di Segni 2001: 31-35.

his audience but because it is very possible that there were members of the community who welcomed this kind of discourse. In fact, the whole encomium may well be read as a literary analogy for the presence of monasticism and the monastic ideal in the life of the eighth-century Christian communities. Thanks to the qualities he developed through spiritual exercise, as manifested during his retreat and later his teaching, Chrysostom was granted the gift of preaching by which he defended the doctrine of the church and the formed the souls of the faithful. Palestinian monks too, including John, through their monastic struggles for purity, used their spiritual authority to shape the correct doctrine but also to assist the spiritual and moral advance of pious Christians who were open to it and sought it. Even when their pastoral message was inspired by stimuli that carried the echoes of matters mostly of lay interest, monastic preachers diligently emphasised the Christian ideal of perfection and its strong salvific connotations for each individual member of the Church, as demonstrated by John's *Encomium of St Barbara* and his treatment of the topic of family.

## 4 | Confronting the authorities: political power and the threat to the faith

Saints lived in a fluid political and religious environment in which the delicate balance between obedience to the divine law and obedience to the law of the state could easily be tipped. John Damascene's hagiographic homilies afforded many opportunities for the representation of authority, arising from the conflictive demands of power which impede the saints' progress in sanctity. The young Barbara, for instance, faces the threat of torture by the local governor for her refusal to sacrifice before the gods. Political command also figures as an overwhelming force in the *Passion of St Artemius*. Artemius is held responsible by the emperor Julian for the murder of his brother Gallus on account of which he is stripped of his rank before he is put on trial for his Christian beliefs. John Chrysostom is likewise drawn into the complex web of political power play through his opposition to the empress Eudoxia's excesses. My aim is to demonstrate that John Damascene takes advantage of the background to these texts to criticise the involvement of secular authorities – pagans, schismatics-heretics, or Christian rulers distracted by their passions – in the life of the Church. John, it will be argued, follows the standard practice of stigmatising the traditional enemies of Christianity, whose religious affiliation also provides the main template for the preacher's polemics against the pagan religion and the odious beliefs of the heretics, to create negative models of political authority for his audience. This will furthermore lead us to consider whether these models simply represented an abstract rejection of political intervention in matters of faith or the preacher was alluding to specific contemporary religious disputes in which political authoritarianism played a key role.

In the homilies worldly authority appears to be enormously influential in the life of Christians. The exercise of political power had far-reaching consequences for the Church as a whole, which, however, was not always detrimental to its historical development. The *Passion of St Artemius*, for example, provides diverse accounts of active rulership which are often assessed according to their contribution to the well-being of the Church. John of Damascus reminds his audience of the victory of the ‘splendid and pious emperor’ Constantine over paganism through his conversion to Christianity and the heavenly revelation of the Cross to him. John marvels

[...] πῶς τὸ Χριστιανῶν θεοφιλὲς ὑψώθη κέρας ὑπὸ τῆς αὐτοῦ προθυμίας καὶ πίστεως συγκροτούμενόν τε καὶ συναυξανόμενον, ὥστε τὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ κήρυγμα πᾶσαν πληρῶσαι τὴν οἰκουμένην, καθαιρεθῆναι δὲ πάντας τοὺς βωμοὺς τῶν εἰδώλων καὶ ξόανα καὶ ναοὺς ἅπαντας, ὅποι ποτὲ γῆς ἐτύγχανον, ἀνοικοδομεῖσθαι δὲ τὰς τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐκκλησίας, ἃς οἱ μισόχριστοι καὶ δυσσεβεῖς βασιλεῖς κατηνάλωσαν.<sup>1</sup>

[...] how the God-beloved horn of the Christians was lifted up, strengthened and increased by his zeal and faith, so that the teaching of Christ might fill the whole world, and all the altars of the idols and statues and all the temples might be destroyed wherever they happened to be on earth, and so that the churches of God, which the Christ-hating and impious emperors laid waste, might be rebuilt.

John depicts Constantine as an exemplary emperor who glorified the Church with his leadership, gifted as he was with the benevolence of Christ himself.<sup>2</sup> Later on, he glosses the attentiveness to the Church’s affairs in commending the prudent governance of Constantine’s son, Constantius II, whose zeal resembled that of his father.<sup>3</sup> St Artemius is presented as Constantius’ close companion. From him Artemius receives the honour of translating the relics of the Apostles to the capital as well as the appointment as governor of Egypt.<sup>4</sup> The saint is thus celebrated not only by earning the esteem and admiration of the emperor but also through his patron’s integrity of character. For this reason, John’s favourable treatment of Constantius is also coupled with the quick dismissal of any suspicions of heresy. His

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<sup>1</sup> *Artem.* 5.9-14

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.* 5.2-4.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.* 17.10-12.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.* 18.1-4.

Arianising tendencies are attributed by John to ‘the impious and most godless Eusebius, bishop of Nicomedia.’<sup>5</sup>

Just as there were political figures that safeguarded the prosperity of the Church, there were also those who adopted a hostile attitude towards it. Religious persecution during the first centuries AD left a permanent imprint on Christian memory.<sup>6</sup> Inevitably, the architects of the violent repression of Christians occupied a central place in anti-pagan literature across the board, not least in hagiography. As Detoraki notes, ‘[o]n the whole, the *Passions* of martyrs are conceived as a confrontation between two opposing worlds: that of the pagans, the persecutors, the magistrate or the Emperor and their acolytes, wielding the full resources of law and order, and that of the Christians and the martyr, armed only with their faith and virtues, of which the first and foremost is endurance.’<sup>7</sup> Much the same picture emerges in the hagiographic homilies of John of Damascus. John develops a discourse that emphasises the tyrannical and godless earthly government of pagan rulers and is configured to evoke in the audience’s mind generic images of power abuse and pervasive moral decay. At the heart of John’s portrayal of pagan figures of authority lies the notion of the diabolical origin of their oppressive power. It was an idea that diachronically permeated descriptions of political misgovernment and blatant mistreatment of Christians.<sup>8</sup> Tapping into a long tradition of considering the Devil as the source of tyrannical rule, John presents earthly rulers as Satan’s docile subjects:

καὶ δὴ λαβὼν τὴν ἐξουσίαν ὄργανα λοιπὸν τῆς ἀσεβείας μεστὰ καὶ αὐτῷ τῇ τοῦ τρόπου παρισουμένους  
ὡμότητι ἐκλεξάμενος τούτους καθίστησιν ἡγεμόνας καὶ ἄρχοντας καὶ δόγμα καθολικῶς δι’ ἐκείνων

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<sup>5</sup> *ibid.* 17.7.

<sup>6</sup> On the memory of martyrdom and its role in the formation of Christian identity, see various essays in Leemans and Mettepenningen 2005; see also Castelli 2004, which has the added benefit of negotiating the idea of martyrdom and memory with reference to modern social and literary theory.

<sup>7</sup> Detoraki 2014: 70.

<sup>8</sup> For discussions of diabolically inspired rulership and the development of this theme with reference to specific authors, see Lunn-Rockliffe 2007: 146-74 on Ambrosiaster and Johannessen 2016 on Eusebius of Caesarea.

ἐκτίθησιν τοῦ μὲν Χριστοῦ παύεσθαι τὴν προσκύνησιν, εἰδώλοις δὲ τὰς θυσίας προσφέρεσθαι καὶ ἀφειδῶς παντοίαις κολάσεσιν ἀναιρεῖσθαι τοὺς ἀντιλέγοντας.

And, indeed, receiving authority and selecting, therefore, his agents, people who were full of impiety and equalled him in brutality, he appointed them rulers and governors, and issued by them a universal edict forbidding the veneration of Christ and ordering that sacrifices should be offered to the idols and that dissenters should be killed unsparingly by all kinds of tortures.<sup>9</sup>

More important, however, is the fact that the theme does not exist in the old hagiographic account of St Barbara which John used in order to write his homily but is a subsequent addition. The passage quoted above belongs to John's introductory discussion preceding the narration of Barbara's martyrdom in which the preacher presents the martyr's sacrifice as a result of her acceptance of God's divine light and the rejection of darkness. We are also told there how the Devil acquired his authority over men. Watching the spiritual ascension of the first humans, John explains, the Tempter could not suffer his inability to exercise power.<sup>10</sup> By divine providence, however, and in order for people to be able to prove willingly their love for God even in the face of perilous temptations, the Devil was granted permission to challenge them through his servants, just as when he obtained God's concession to test Job's faith.<sup>11</sup> Thus the concept of secular power being exercised by rulers that act under demonic persuasion is not a mere rhetorical exaggeration based on common hagiographical *topoi* but should be understood within John's cosmological system. Barbara's suffering at the hands of the governor Marcianus, that 'servant' (ὑπηρέτης), 'advocate' (συνήγορος), and 'guardian' (ὑπασπιστῶν) of the Devil,<sup>12</sup> was part of God's design for the glorification of the saint. His statement in *On the Orthodox Faith* clearly reflects this worldview, according to which demonic forces can potentially yield power to the world with God's tolerance: 'They have no

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<sup>9</sup> *Barb.* 6.33-9.

<sup>10</sup> *Barb.* 6.19-20: for it is unbearable for him not to have power over anyone.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.* 6.21-9.

<sup>12</sup> *Barb.* 14.1-2; 15.24-26.

power or strength against anyone, unless this is permitted them by the dispensation of God, as in the case of Job and as has been written in the Gospel about the swine.’<sup>13</sup>

The same idea is repeated in the *Passion of St Artemius*, again with reference to Job:

Καὶ φησὶν πρὸς αὐτόν· ὦ βασιλεῦ, διὰ τί οὕτως ἀπανθρώπως ἄνδρας ἁγίους καὶ τῷ Θεῷ ἀφιερωμένους αἰκίζῃ καὶ ἀναγκάζεις ἐξάρνους γενέσθαι τῆς ἑαυτῶν πίστεως; Γίνωσκε τοίνυν ὅτι καὶ αὐτὸς ἄνθρωπος εἶ ὁμοιοπαθὴς καὶ τῆς αὐτῆς φύσεως τῶν παθημάτων μετεσχηκῶς καὶ εἰ Θεός σε βασιλέα κατέστησεν· εἰ ἄρα γε ἐκ Θεοῦ τὸ βασίλειον εἴληφας, καὶ μὴ ἀρχέκακος καὶ πονηρὸς διάβολος ὥσπερ τὸν Ἰὼβ ἐξητήσατο καὶ ἔλαβεν, οὕτως καὶ σὲ καθ’ ἡμῶν ἐξαίτησάμενος εἴληφεν ὁ παμπόνηρος, ἵνα σινιάσῃ τὸν τοῦ Χριστοῦ σῖτον, καὶ ἐπισπεύρῃ ζιζάνια.<sup>14</sup>

And Artemius said to him: O emperor, why do you so inhumanely mistreat men who are holy and consecrated to God, and force them to deny their faith? Know, then, that you, too, can suffer the like, having a share in the same type of pains, even if God appointed you emperor; if in fact it is from God that you received your empire, and it is not the malicious Devil, the author of evil, who demanded you against us and received you, the all-wicked one, just as once he demanded and received Job, so as to winnow the wheat of Christ and sow the seed of weeds.

This passage already formed part of the old *passion* narrative and was preserved by John in the homily.<sup>15</sup> But the impression that the emperor is in the range of the Devil’s influence is further reinforced in other parts of the sermon. Macarius pities Julian for denying Christ and attaching himself to the Devil and his angels (προσκολληθεὶς τῷ διαβόλῳ καὶ τοῖς ἀγγέλοις αὐτοῦ).<sup>16</sup> In his final prayer, Artemius thanks God for the strength he granted him to ‘put to shame the wicked Julian, who skipped away from your dominion and attached himself to the Devil and those who hate you / καταισχυῖναι τὸν ἀλάστορα Ἰουλιανὸν τὸν ἀποσκιρτήσαντα τῆς σῆς δεσποτείας καὶ προσκολληθέντα τῷ διαβόλῳ καὶ τοῖς μισοῦσί σε’.<sup>17</sup> The extracts

<sup>13</sup> *Expos.* 18.19-21 (trans. Chase 1958: 209). On the chapters 17 and 18 of the *On the Orthodox Faith* regarding angels and demons, see Louth 2002: 120-5.

<sup>14</sup> *Artem.* 35.13-20.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *PArtem.* 168.1-7 Cod. C/18-25 Cod. D.

<sup>16</sup> *Artem.* 32.7.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.* 65.4-6. Barbara’s persecutor Marcianus is also said to be controlled by the Devil: ‘Ἄλλ’ οὐδὲ τούτων γιγνομένων κόρον τῆς μανίας ἐλάμβανεν ὁ τοῦ διαβόλου ὑπηρέτης τε καὶ συνήγορος, ἐφ’ ἑτερον δὲ βασανιστηρίων εἶδος τὴν τῆς πονηρίας πηγαίαν διάνοιαν ἔτρεπεν ἔνδον ἐγκαθήμενον ἔχων τὸν τῆς πάσης κακίας ἀρχηγὸν καὶ γεννήτορα καὶ εὐρήμονα δράκοντα, τὸν ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἀνθρωποκτόνον καὶ μισάνθρωπον. / But even after all this had occurred, the Devil’s servant and advocate did not have his rage satiated, but turned his



John chose to include from Philostorgius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* supply the homily with apt historical examples of the consequences that this diabolically driven power can have. In Constantinople and Antioch, Julian and the governor of the East, also named Julian, restored the altars of the gods, redirected the revenues of the Christian churches, generously given by previous emperors, to pagan temples, recalled their priests, seized church treasures, and shut down Christian places of worship.<sup>18</sup> And when the temple of Apollo in Daphne was reduced to ruins by a 'God-driven fire', Julian gave permission to assault the Christian churches. John exclaims:

Τούτων οὖν παρὰ τοῦ τυράννου καὶ ἀσεβοῦς Ἰουλιανοῦ κελευσθέντων, τί τῶν μεγίστων κακῶν οὐκ ἐτελέσθη; Τί δὲ τῶν ἀπηχεστάτων οὐκ ἐλέχθη τῶν ἀφέτῳ γλώσσει λαλούντων τὰ ἄρρητα κατὰ τῆς τῶν χριστιανῶν πίστεως καὶ βλασφημούντων εἰς τὸν κύριον καὶ θεὸν ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν πάσαις ταῖς πόλεσιν;<sup>19</sup>

So when these orders were issued by the tyrannical and impious Julian, what great evil was not committed? What discordant words were not uttered by those who speak the unspeakable with loose tongues against the Christian faith and blaspheme our Lord and God Jesus Christ in all the cities?

By describing the acts of the martyrs' persecutors within the traditional framework of worldly authorities inflicting suffering upon Christians at the instigation of the Devil, John spells out in stark terms the very real threat of evil-oriented power. The appropriate treatment of the themes and content of his primary sources anchors, furthermore, the martyrdom narratives not only in a cosmological but also in a factual context, since the preacher sketches the consequences of arrogant and coercive power for past Christian communities. Julian's obsession for the exercise of authority attests to the coherence of a politically sensitive discourse in John's homilies. On several occasions, the emperor cannot conceal his uneasiness about the feasibility of controlling the defiant Christians:

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mind, which gashes forth evil, to yet another kind of torture, for in him resided the lord and begetter of all evil, the eloquent serpent, the eternal manslayer and manhater.' *Barb.* 14.1-5.

<sup>18</sup> *Artem.* 22-3.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.* 57.7-12.

Τίνες ἐστέ ἄνθρωποι καὶ ποίου βίου καὶ τύχης τυγχάνοντες ἐπὶ τοῦ ἡμετέρου προσήχθητε βήματος; Εὐγένιος ἔφη· Χριστιανοὶ ἐσμεν καὶ τῆς Χριστοῦ ποιμνῆς ἀγελάρχαι τυγχάνομεν· τοῦτο βίος ἡμῖν καὶ τύχη καὶ ἐπιτήδευμα. Καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς· Ποῦ τοίνυν ἐστὶν ἡ τοῦ Χριστοῦ ποιμνὴ ἧς ὑμεῖς ἀγελάρχαι τυγχάνετε; Καὶ ὁ Εὐγένιος· Πᾶσα ἡ οἰκουμένη, ὅσῃν ὁ ἥλιος ἐφορᾷ καὶ ὅσοι ἐπὶ ταύτης εἰσὶν ἄνθρωποι. Καὶ ὁ Ἰουλιανός· Ἡμεῖς δὲ τίνων ἄρχομεν καὶ τίνων σήμερον βασιλεύομεν, ὧ ταλαίπωρον καὶ δυστυχέστατον ἀνθρωπάριον, εἰ, ὅσῃν ὁ ἥλιος ἐφορᾷ γῆν, ὁ Χριστὸς ποιμνὴν κέκτηται; Καὶ ὁ μάρτυς· Τῆς αὐτῆς, ὧ βασιλεῦ, καὶ ποιμνῆς καὶ ἀγέλης ἐπιστατεῖς, ἥσπερ καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀγελάρχαι τυγχάνομεν· δι' αὐτοῦ γὰρ βασιλεῖς βασιλεύουσιν καὶ τύραννοι κρατοῦσι γῆς, καὶ αὐτός σοι τὸ βασίλειον σήμερον δέδωκε· Κἂν αὐτὸς ἀχάριστος περὶ τὸν εὐεργέτην ἐφάνης, αὖριον δὲ πάλιν ἄλλῳ τινὶ δώσει· ἐφήμερος γὰρ εἶ καὶ ἐφημέρων νῦν βασιλεύεις. Αὐτὸς δὲ τὴν βασιλείαν αἰώνιον κέκτηται καὶ πέρας οὐδέπω λαμβάνουσιν.<sup>20</sup>

Who are you, people, and what sort of life and fate has befallen you, to be brought here before this tribunal?' Eugenius said: 'We are Christians and herdsmen of Christ's flock. This is our life, our fate, and our pursuit.' And the emperor asked: 'Where, then, is Christ's flock, whose herdsmen you happen to be?' And Eugenius answered: 'It is the whole world such as the sun looks upon, and all men that live in it.' Julian said: 'And who do I rule over, whose emperor am I now, o wretched and ill-fated petty man, if Christ has all the land upon which the sun looks as his flock?' And the martyr replied: 'You oversee, o emperor, the very same flock and herd whose herdsmen we also happen to be; for thanks to him, kings reign and tyrants hold sway over the earth; it is him who granted you today this kingdom. And if you showed yourself ungrateful to your benefactor, tomorrow he will once again grant it to someone else; for you are a short-lived creature and you are now reigning over short-lived men. But he possesses a kingdom that is eternal and never has an end.

Voicing Julian's fear of disobedience, John calls upon his audience to break all ties of allegiance to an emperor that is disrespectful of Christ's sovereignty. The preacher lets Eugenius explain the reasons for this insubordination: God is the source of all authority and his kingdom, the Church, is eternal. When the Church is besieged by its enemies, a response to the policies of its persecutors is required in order for her integrity to be preserved. Artemius cries out to God that Julian threatens his people and inheritance, that this integrity is under attack.<sup>21</sup> Christ, however, immediately reassures him that Julian will be killed fighting the Persians, becoming a sacrifice to the demons that he worshipped, and that 'another will

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.* 25.6-21. And again, addressing Macarius, in *ibid.* 32.12-16: 'Τί τὸ δόξαν ὑμῖν, ὧ παμμίαροι, ὅτι μηδὲ μιᾶς τινοῦ ἐξουσίας ἢ παρὰ βασιλέως ἢ παρὰ τινοῦ τῶν ἀρχόντων μετεκληφότες παντί τε καὶ πανταχοῦ διατρέχοντες τὰς τῶν μεγάλων θεῶν σπονδὰς τε καὶ θυσίας ἀνατρέπεις σπουδάζετε / What are your beliefs, o abominable ones, that you accept no authority, neither from the emperor nor from any of the governors, and running over to everyone and everywhere, are eager to upset the libations and sacrifices to the great gods?'

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.* 65.20-1.

reign in his place, a true Christian and most pious, who will shatter and crush all the objects of worship of the idols. / Καὶ βασιλεύσει ἕτερος ἀντ' αὐτοῦ χριστιανικώτατος καὶ θεοφιλέστατος καταθραύων καὶ κατασπῶν πάντα τὰ τῶν εἰδώλων σεβάσματα.<sup>22</sup> Earthly rulers are thus portrayed as dispensable. The entire focus is on the timeless nature of the Church, which emerges victorious in light of the reputed exploits of the martyrs and in the expectation of future rulers who will put political authority in the service of the people of God.

However firmly rooted in the remote world of hagiography, martyrdom narratives were used by John as a means of adducing models of tyrannical government. A similar debate over the relationship between political rule and the precepts of the Church governs the final part of the *Encomium of St John Chrysostom*. A mix of political and ecclesiastical persecution determined the final years of the saint's life which he spent exiled amidst many hardships until his death during a second exile. Although his persecution was the result of complex circumstances involving intrigues in the ecclesiastical hierarchy and disputes with the imperial palace, the rivalry of the empress Eudoxia (395-404) with the saint became in the hagiographical tradition the banner of those who would overthrow him from the see of Constantinople.

In the encomium, John of Damascus refers to the episode that caused the feud between the saint and Eudoxia. A defenceless and destitute widow sought the help of John Chrysostom when the empress decided to confiscate her land and thus stripped her of her livelihood. Enraged by the injustice (ἀδικία) of Eudoxia's actions, John undertook to restore the order and called the empress to repentance. In a dramatised monologue by John dotted with rhetorical questions addressed to the empress, the preacher depicts the saint as a critic of

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<sup>22</sup> *ibid.* 66.18-9.

imperial arbitrariness.<sup>23</sup> John Chrysostom appears astonished at the empress' insolence and her infringement of the law, all the more because of her role as its protector. His first address to her captures the greatness of her error: 'What have you done, lawless woman?' To his eyes, Eudoxia had relinquished her royal status and was now a common woman and an outlaw (παράνομον γύναιον). The seriousness of her unlawful deed does not lie only in her responsibility toward civil law whose guarantor she is. The moral content of her act has even greater implications:

Ἀλουργίδα περίκεισαι οἷα νόμου φύλαξ προβεβλημένη, καὶ νόμον καταπατεῖς; Ὡς τῆς ἀρρήτου σοφίας τοῦ φήσαντος· «Μὴ δότε τὰ ἅγια τοῖς κυσὶ, μηδὲ ρίπτετε τοὺς μαργαρίτας ἔμπροσθεν τῶν χοίρων.» Αὕτη γὰρ τὸν θεῖον νόμον καταπατήσασα τὸν ἅγιον, τὸν μαργαρίτην δηλαδὴ τὸν πολύτιμον, στραφεῖσα τὴν πενιχρὰν χήραν ἔρρηξε τὴν ταύτης ἐφήμερον βιοτὴν διαπάσασα.<sup>24</sup>

You are dressed in a purple robe, for you have been appointed protector of the law, and yet you trample down the law? O unspeakable wisdom of him who said 'give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine.' For having trampled down the sacred and divine law, namely, the precious pearl, she turned against the needy widow and shattered her, snatching from her her daily livelihood.

Eudoxia's injustice is framed as a violation of Christ's commands and civic law is equated with divine law. The blurring of the boundaries between human and divine justice ensures that imperial authority is constrained by the teachings of the Gospel and is directed to the good of the subjects. As a pastor, John Chrysostom is bound by his upright character to intervene into the dispute between the empress and the widow with παρρησία, a feature which the preacher emphasises by comparing it with the outspokenness of John the Baptist toward Herod.<sup>25</sup> Παρρησία was a notable characteristic of many ecclesiastical figures, seen as a corrective force against unacceptable tendencies.<sup>26</sup> Chrysostom was no exception<sup>27</sup> and his

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<sup>23</sup> *Chrys.* 14.12-35.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.* 14.12-7.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.* 14. 24-5.

<sup>26</sup> See Brown 1992: 116-7, 57-8 for the παρρησία of bishops and holy men.

<sup>27</sup> See Liebeschuetz 2011: 224-47.

outspokenness stands in the homily as a confirmation of one's right to uncompromising sincerity.

Against this background, it seems plausible to argue that John of Damascus' homilies can be construed as a criticism against harmful political involvement in the life of the Church in his own time. Certainly, the discourse of persecution in the martyrial homilies of St Barbara and St Artemius is largely symbolic. Although paganism was still present in the Near East at the end of the sixth century, both in the region of Syria and Palestine, by the time of John Damascene it cannot be thought of as a threatening rival to Christianity.<sup>28</sup> It is difficult to know if it still had some relevance for Christians. The term paganism does not refer to a single set of religious beliefs but an unlimited variety of traditions and practices. The sanctioning of Christianity by the Roman emperors accelerated the decline of polytheistic traditions in the Near East as it did in other parts of the empire. But the resistance of paganism lasted longer than usually thought, and crucially, was not limited to the survival of Greco-Roman polytheistic practices which were only a part of a wider system of pagan beliefs with local and ethnic character.<sup>29</sup> In fact, pockets of paganism survived even the rise of Islam, the most famous example being that of the Sabians of Harran (Hellenopolis, modern-day Turkey), whose last temple was not closed until the eleventh century.<sup>30</sup> Polytheism therefore was present, though perhaps not manifestly in urban contexts, and it is likely that people were aware of its existence. We should not forget that John Damascene mentions that at first, the Arabs were idolaters.<sup>31</sup> Paganism, of course, was by no means a serious opponent for the monotheistic religions in the eight-century Near East. It represented,

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<sup>28</sup> For Syria: Bowersock 1990: 36; Drijvers 1982: 35-43; also Trombley 1994: 153-95. For Palestine: Ribak 2007: 17-8 and bibliography cited there; Bar 2003: 401-21.

<sup>29</sup> See the study by Teixidor 1977.

<sup>30</sup> Berkey 2003: 99; 169-170.

<sup>31</sup> *Haeres.* 100.6.

rather, the literary memories of Christianity's superiority over demonic forces and earthly tyrants.

Idolatry does not monopolise interest in the homilies. In 325, the emperor Constantine summoned an assembly of bishops in Nicaea to resolve the religious division arising out of the teaching of Arius and his supporters, who disputed the status of the Son in the Godhead. In the *Passion of St Artemius*, the new provocation is heralded by the devil's instruments right in the aftermath of Constantine's success in shaking off the fetters of paganism:

Τούτων οὖν γινομένων οὐκ ἤνεγκεν τὴν τοσαύτην μεταβολὴν ὁ τοῖς καλοῖς βασκαίνων διάβολος, ἀλλ' ἤγειρε ζάλην καὶ τάραχον διὰ τῶν αὐτοῦ οἰκείων ὑπασπιστῶν. Ἄρειος γάρ, ὁ τῆς μανίας ἐπώνυμος, τῆς ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ Ἐκκλησίας ὑπάρχων πρεσβύτερος, δεινῶς τε ταύτην ἐτάραξε δόγμα κινήσας παράνομον καὶ πάσης βλασφημίας ἀνάμεστον· ἔφασκε γὰρ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ, τὸν προαιώνιον, κτίσμα εἶναι καὶ τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ πατρὸς οὐσίας ἀλλότριον. Διὰ τοι ταῦτα ἡ ἐν Νικαίᾳ τῶν ἁγίων τριακοσίων δεκαοκτὼ πατέρων ἀθροίζεται σύνοδος καὶ τὸν Ἄρειον καθελοῦσα τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν κηρύττει τοῦ πατρὸς ὁμοούσιον.<sup>32</sup>

While, then, these things were happening, the Devil, who envies good things, could not bear such change, but he roused a storm and upheaval through his own shield-bearers. For Arius, after whom this madness was named, while he was a presbyter of the Church in Alexandria, threw it into terrible confusion by advancing a doctrine that was unlawful and full of every kind of blasphemy, for he said that the only-begotten Son of God from before the ages was a creation and alien from the essence of the God and Father.

This is the first mention of Arius in John Damascene's hagiographic sermons and in his homiletic work as a whole, with the rest also occurring in the *Passion of St Artemius*. The description reflects once again the fundamental assumption that the peace and integrity of the church are constantly contested. In this respect, Arius' beliefs are yet another subversive threat, essentially indistinguishable from that of paganism, only this time dressed in Christian clothing. Without unnecessary complexities, we are presented with the core of the 'blasphemous' Arian creed: the denial of Christ's consubstantiality with the Father and his status as a mere created being. Naturally, this brief synopsis, though not imprecise,

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<sup>32</sup> *Artem.* 6.1-10.

corresponds only roughly to the finer points of the controversy. In reality, the Arian position was less blunt in its specifics than its opponents intended it to appear. Arians, for example, did not reject the divinity of the Son but argued that his divinity was simply distinct from that of the Father as well as that Christ was a κτίσμα, but one that was τέλειον, unlike any other created being.<sup>33</sup> In the homily, however, no such technicalities are invoked.<sup>34</sup>

Arianism was at the centre of the late antique polemic and exegesis of Athanasius, Epiphanius of Salamis, Gregory Nazianzen and others, who often indiscriminately assigned the term ‘Arian’ or ‘semi-Arian’ to any group that was opposed to the Council of Nicaea, even if those anti-Nicene groups would in fact have conflicting views.<sup>35</sup> Despite its constructed status as an overarching heresy which linked divergent heterodox beliefs, Arianism was already in decline in the fifth-century Greek-speaking East, especially after a series of imperial policies.<sup>36</sup> It is certainly not much of a concern for John Damascene, who does not treat it separately anywhere in his theological oeuvre.<sup>37</sup> Arianism, nevertheless, preserves the stigma of the arch-heresy, with which John readily associates any group embracing non-orthodox beliefs.<sup>38</sup>

More important is its corrupting influence on the imperial authorities. The Arian bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia is said to have led the emperor Constantius towards the Arian heresy, and later on Constantius is portrayed pondering on the convocation of a second council with the purpose of condemning the doctrine of consubstantiality, once again urged by the Arians.<sup>39</sup> Similar concerns about the danger that the mixture of heresy with a misguided

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<sup>33</sup> Wiles 1996: 7. Arius’ view of the Son as a ‘perfect creation’ is found in his *Letter to Alexander*, quoted by Athanasius (*De Synodis* 16). Elsewhere, Athanasius paraphrases Arius, deliberately omitting τέλειον (*Oratio contra Arianos*, II.9); see Gwynn 2012: 55-103, esp. 60 and 81.

<sup>34</sup> In contrast to his polemical works, John never expounds on heretical views in his homilies in order to refute them later on, in what seems to be a way to avoid unwelcome confusion.

<sup>35</sup> Wiles 1996: 26-32.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.* 32-4.

<sup>37</sup> With the exception of *De Haeresibus* 69 where we are given a brief definition of Arianism.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, *Contra Jacobitas*, 10.2; *De duabus in Christo voluntatibus*, 8.col 2.88.

<sup>39</sup> *Artem.* 17.5-8 and 20.7-9.

political leadership poses for Christians emerge at the end of the *Passion of St Artemius* with regard to Julian's successors to the imperial throne. Jovian 'joined the heresy of the Anomoeans, that is to say Eunomians', while 'the emperor Valens was drawn to the Anomoean heresy, and the bishops once again began to be persecuted and banished, with Eudoxius, along with Aetius, Eunomius, and the rest of the heretics who represented the Anomoean heresy, being the leaders.'<sup>40</sup> However, John quickly takes the opportunity to underline in the words of the emperor Valentinian the characteristics of the relationship between the Church and the emperors:

Οὐαλεντινιανῷ τοίνυν ἐντυχόντες οἱ ἐπίσκοποι τῆς καθαρᾶς καὶ ὀρθῆς πίστεω, ἤτήσαντο γενέσθαι σύνοδον. Καὶ ἀπεκρίθη αὐτοῖς, ὅτι ἐμοὶ μὲν ὁ θεὸς ἔδωκεν ἄρχειν τῶν τοῦ κόσμου πραγμάτων, ὑμῖν δὲ τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν· ἐγὼ τοίνυν εἰς τοῦτο τὸ πρᾶγμα οὐδὲν ἔχω. Ὅπου οὖν δοκεῖ ὑμῖν, συνελθόντες τὴν σύνοδον ποιήσατε. – ταῦτα οὖν ἔτι ὀρθὸν ἔχων τὸ φρόνημα καὶ μήπω διαφθαρὲν.<sup>41</sup>

When, then, the bishops of the pure and right faith met with Valentinian, they requested that a council should be held. And he answered them that 'God has granted to me to manage the affairs of the world, while to you the churches; I, therefore, have nothing to do with this matter. So meet and hold the council wherever it seems best to you. – He said this, then, while his views were still right and not yet corrupted.

With brilliant clarity, John summarises the essence of the theme that is present in all three homilies and is none other than the attitude of the secular authorities towards Christians and the Church. If political power cannot actively be put to the service of the Church as in the case of Constantine the Great, then it should not cast its shadow upon the lives of the people of God. Otherwise, it may result in appalling suffering and grievous injustice.

At this point an obvious question arises: Is it possible that John's discourse does not slip beyond the horizon of paganism and early Christian heresy? Even if there are no explicit testimonies to contemporary religious controversies and the political machinations behind them, his presentation of the events of the past suggests otherwise. To begin with, John's

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<sup>40</sup> *ibid.* 70.6-7: τῇ τῶν Ἀνομοιπτῶν αἵρέσει προσετέθη ἡγουν Εὐνομιανῶν; 70.25-8: Ὑπαχθέντος δὲ τοῦ βασιλέως Οὐάλεντος τῇ αἵρέσει τοῦ ἀνομοίου ἤρξαντο πάλιν οἱ ἐπίσκοποι ἐλαύνεσθαι καὶ ἐξορίζεσθαι, Εὐδοξίου σὺν Ἀετίῳ καὶ Εὐνομίῳ καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν αἱρετικῶν τὸ ἀνόμοιον πρεσβευόντων, στρατηγούντων.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.* 70.14-9.



hagiographic homilies were not designed as direct refutations of the heresies of his time. Their polemical engagement with pagan or heretical ideas was conditioned by the historical and religious context in which the saints' narratives were placed. Yet John always appears keen to emphasise in his homilies the rudiments of the Christian dogma either through his own voice or through the martyrs' dramatised responses to the provocations of their persecutors. Sections 4-6 of the *Encomium of St Barbara*, which, as already mentioned, serve as an introduction to St Barbara's martyrion, contain an exposition of faith: the faith which the saint willingly accepted and for the sake of which she was martyred.<sup>42</sup> John begins with the creation of man by God the Word and his subsequent fall by the deception of the serpent, which led to his submission to bodily corruption, impiety, and the veneration of fake gods.<sup>43</sup> Like a good shepherd, God received the form of man out of his mercy for him and out of intolerance for the hubris of Satan, and conquered sin and death by the cross. The devil was stripped of his power, and Christ asserted his authority over the ruler of this world, the Devil.<sup>44</sup> There follows the resurrection of Christ and the spread of his message by the Apostles through whom the divine fire (i.e. the Holy Spirit) was spread all over the ecumene. Many men's souls, received the cleansing fire, while others welcomed the darkness.<sup>45</sup> Barbara's soul accepted the divine revelation like a fertile field. The Devil, however, could not tolerate the spiritual advance of the faithful. He therefore banned the worship of Christ and launched executions through impious governors and rulers who were selected to serve him.<sup>46</sup>

Technically, this section accommodates the transition from the proem to the main part of the sermon. Its purpose, however, is also first, to present major Christian beliefs and second,

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<sup>42</sup> *Barb.* 6.2: δεδεγμένη δὲ μᾶλλον τὴν αἴγλην τῆς πίστεως.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.* 4.1-13.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.* 5.1-11.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.* 5.12-35.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.* 6.33-41.

to reaffirm the common faith of the congregation, before turning to the main passion narrative. Thus, all the events that define the Christian faith find their place in the passage: the creation of man according to the image of God, the Incarnation, the Resurrection, the Pentecost. These, in turn, distinguish the faithful from all those who do not share the same beliefs and grant them a common sense of identity, reinforced by the commemoration of an event such as the persecution. John's exposition of the Christian doctrine bears many similarities to a passage from the *Passion of St Artemius* in which Eugenius silences the emperor's mockery of the Incarnation. In his defence, Eugenius admits that Julian's nonsensical talking does not deserve an answer but he will attempt one. Eugenius reproduces the concepts of incarnation and redemption; the coming of Christ, which is announced in the prophecies of the Old Testament and even in pagan oracles; his suffering on the cross and resurrection; and the missionary work of the Apostles.<sup>47</sup> Elsewhere, Artemius equates martyrdom with the passion of Christ and refers to his status as a son of God by grace, alluding to the theology of sonship:

Χαίρω τοίνυν καὶ ἀγαλλιῶ τοῖς τοῦ Δεσπότη μου παθήμασι λαμπρυνόμενος. Κουφίζει μου τὸν πόνον ἡ μίμησις τοῦ πάθους, ἐλαφρύνει μου τὴν ἀλγηδὸνά ἢ ὁμοτιμία τῶν κρειττόνων. Κάγῳ γὰρ δι' αὐτὸν υἱὸς θεοῦ ἐγενόμην διὰ τοῦ βαπτίσματος καὶ τῆς δωρεᾶς τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος καὶ ἔτι μᾶλλον γενήσομαι διὰ τῆς ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστάσεως.<sup>48</sup>

So I rejoice and exult, brightened by the sufferings of my Lord. The imitation of his passion relieves my pain and the equal honour brought by things superior lightens my grief. I too through him became a son of God through baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit, and will be even more so through the resurrection from the dead.

At the end of the narrative, Artemius asks Christ for his mercy for the sins of the Christians and of the heretics:

Ἰδοὺ γὰρ τὰ θυσιαστήριά σου κατεσκάφησαν καὶ τὸ ἁγίασμά σου ἐμπέπηρηται καὶ ἡ εὐπρέπεια τοῦ οἴκου σου ἐξηφάνισται καὶ τὸ αἷμα τῆς διαθήκης σου ἐξουδένωται διὰ τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν καὶ τὰς

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<sup>47</sup> *Artem.* 27.9-31.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.* 38.19-24.

βλασφημίας, ἃς ἐξέχεεν Ἄρειος κατὰ σοῦ, τοῦ μονογενοῦς, καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου σου πνεύματος ἄλλοτριῶν σε τῆς τοῦ πατρὸς ὁμοουσιότητος καὶ ἀποξενῶν σε τῆς αὐτοῦ φύσεως, κτίσμα σε ἀποκαλῶν, τὸν δημιουργὸν πάσης τῆς κτίσεως, καὶ ὑπὸ χρόνον τιθεὶς τὸν τοὺς αἰῶνας δημιουργήσαντα, φάσκων οὕτως· Ἦν ποτε ὅτε οὐκ ἦν ὁ υἱός, βουλήσεως καὶ θελήσεως υἱόν σε ἀποκαλῶν ὁ παρανομώτατος.<sup>49</sup>

For behold, your altars have been razed to the ground, your sanctuary has been set on fire, the dignity of your house has been obliterated, and the blood of your covenant has come to nothing because of our sins and the blasphemies that Arius poured out against you, the only-begotten, and against your Holy Spirit, depriving you of your consubstantiality with the Father and alienating you from his nature, calling you a creation, you the creator of the whole creation, and placing beneath time you who created the ages, saying this: ‘There was a time when the Son did not exist,’ and calling you, the lawless one, the Son of will and volition.

John’s persistent affirmation of Christian creeds does not represent a stereotypical repetition of theological orthodoxy through statements of a general nature or occasional polemical utterances against certain religious groups from the past. In fact, his polemical treatises suggest not simply a keen sense of correct doctrine but a clear concern with the religious integrity and identity of the orthodox communities to which he himself belonged. John wrote no less than six major pieces targeting specific deviations from the definitions of Chalcedonian orthodoxy. Three of these (*Against the Jacobites*, *On the Trisagion Hymn*, *Against the Acephali*) were directed against Monophysitism, which rejected the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon as over-emphasising the distinction between the two natures of Christ. In the quest for unanimity, the Chalcedonian formula that Christ had two natures and one person passed through several stages of debate. Renewed attempts to achieve reconciliation were initiated by the emperor Heraclius (610-41), leading to the doctrines of monenergism and later monothelitism, namely that in Christ there is a single theandric (divine-human) activity and a single divine will.<sup>50</sup> Both formulas were fiercely opposed, most notably by Sophronius of Jerusalem and Maximus the Confessor, but imperial efforts to impose monothelitism persisted until John Damascene’s own time under the emperor

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<sup>49</sup> *ibid.* 65.22-30.

<sup>50</sup> For discussions of the religious and political context that led to the emergence of these doctrines and to the subsequent disputes about them, see Booth 2014: esp. 186-224 and 259-77; Jankowiak 2013; *id.* 2012.

Philippikos (711-13).<sup>51</sup> With his *On the Two Wills in Christ*, John denounces the superiority of the divine will in Christ, while his two treatises on Nestorianism, which remained relevant in the wider context of Christological controversies, complete the list of polemical works on the topic of Christ's unity.

But John's endeavours were not aimed only at a theologically literate readership. They were also diffused into his sermons. The prologue to the *Encomium of St John Chrysostom* seems to address the ongoing Christological disputes with which the Christian communities of his time were preoccupied. As he sets out to praise Chrysostom's theological vision of the Trinitarian unity, John Damascene says that the saint's teaching proclaims the singularity of God and the existence of three persons, whose 'union and distinction is incredible' (παράδοξόν τινα φέρουσιν τὴν ἑνωσὶν τε καὶ τὴν διαίρεσιν).<sup>52</sup> This initial confession of the unity and distinctness within the Trinity is followed by a dense exposition of Christological doctrine. John Chrysostom taught, we are told, that the Son of God was united to the human nature and is now seen in his two natures (διφυῆς ἀληθῶς γνωριζόμενος).<sup>53</sup> Christ's two natures are highlighted emphatically (ἀληθῶς). Their union in a single person or *hypostasis* marks the quintessence of synodical Christology. Doctrine is at this point carefully phrased, since it is the confusion over what constitutes nature and person which leads to positions considered either Monophysite or Nestorian. Furthermore, the divine and human natures of the Son are perfectly distinct, both having will and energy (θελητικὴν ἑκατέραν καὶ αὐτεξούσιον καὶ ἐνεργητικὴν).<sup>54</sup> Christ has two wills and two activities. Monenergism and

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<sup>51</sup> A few years earlier, around 700, Anastasius of Sinai was still interested in the Monothelite controversy composing a series of anti-Monothelite works (Jankowiak 2013: 23-4), which indicates the need for a continuous and firm refutation of recent heretical movements, also evident in John of Damascus, even though Monothelitism had been condemned at the Council of 680/1. Although Jankowiak notes that even as late as the 700s, Anastasius' information on the details of the controversy was 'inexact', this does not mean that it was not still relevant for Christians in the Middle East. Louth 2002: 166 points to the existence of a Christian group, the Maronites of Lebanon, who had accepted monothelitism even after its official condemnation.

<sup>52</sup> *Chrys.* 3.4-5.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.* 3.15.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.* 3.20-1.

monothelitism, on the other hand, assume a single activity and will. However, the proposition that Christ has one nature with one energy and will has dramatic soteriological consequences. The Son of God brings about the salvation of humanity through both natures. Elsewhere John of Damascus protests: ‘If he did not assume a human will, he did not become perfectly human. If he did not assume a human will, he did not heal that which first suffered in us. For the unassumed is unhealed, as Gregory the theologian said. For what was it that fell save the will? What was it that sinned save the will?’<sup>55</sup>

We thus observe the implicit engagement with heretical views by presenting orthodox definitions of doctrine, and although no specific reference is made to heterodox groups, the preacher’s intentions would have easily been perceived. Interestingly, John Chrysostom’s work contains no accounts over the two will and energies of Christ, since no such debate existed yet. However, John of Damascus anachronistically pictures Chrysostom as a defender of these doctrines. As W. Mayer has rightly pointed out, the saint ‘is adduced as a champion of orthodoxy’.<sup>56</sup> The orthodox congregation is represented by the voice of John Chrysostom himself. In summarising Trinitarian and Christological definitions as elements of Chrysostom’s teaching, John criticises the erroneous Monophysite and Monothelite doctrines.

John’s homilies could therefore awake associations with the present reality. Equally, if we are to understand the implications of his portrayals of figures of authority and the discourse he develops about their interaction with the saints and the Church, we should take into account some of his own attitudes towards political authority and heresy as expressed in his other works and particularly in his treatises *Against the Iconoclasts*. The first substantial encounter between Artemius and Julian in the *Passion of St Artemius* (40-49) may provide us with the start of the thread for pinpointing the nature and focus of John’s allusions. Although Julian had a mocking attitude towards Christianity during his address to Macarius and

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<sup>55</sup> *Volunt.* 28.34-7; see also Louth 2002: 169.

<sup>56</sup> Mayer 2015: 141 fn. 5.

Eugenius, this time he adopts a more sophisticated tone and attempts to argue in favour of the worship of the gods. He points to the benefits of the sun for humans, the brightness of the moon and the pleasing sight of the stars – nothing can surpass the grandeur of the heavenly bodies and to these the Greeks and Romans naturally pay their respect and attach their hopes.<sup>57</sup> It is also to them that they give names such as Apollo and Artemis and for whom they set up images which people ‘revere and honour’ (σέβουσιν ἄνθρωποι καὶ τιμῶσι).<sup>58</sup>

Julian’s next comment is unexpected:

Οὐχ ὡς θεοὺς δὲ τιμῶσι τὰς εἰκόνας αὐτῶν – ἅπαγε· τοῦτο γὰρ τὸ ἀπλούστερον καὶ ἀγροικικὸν τῶν ἀνθρώπων διαλαμβάνεται γένος –, ἐπεὶ οἱ τὴν φιλοσοφίαν ἀσπαζόμενοι καὶ τὰ τῶν θεῶν ἀκριβῶς ἐξετάζοντες οἶδασι, τίτιν τὴν τιμὴν ἀπονέμουσι καὶ πρὸς τίνα διαβαίνει ἢ τῶν θεῶν ἀγαλμάτων προσκύνῃσι.<sup>59</sup>

But they do not honour their images as gods – heaven forbid! For this is what the more naive and rustic sort of people believe – since those who embrace philosophy and accurately examine the affairs of the gods know to whom they pay their honour and to whom passes the veneration of divine statues.

Julian makes a clear distinction between the divine beings and their material representations, claiming that the veneration of statues is in fact addressed to the gods, not to the objects themselves. Although the historical Julian expressed similar views in his works, it is impossible that John quotes Julian at this point.<sup>60</sup> Paradoxical though it is to find a statement which vindicates and ‘rationalises’ the veneration of idols in a homily that is unmistakably against idolatry, more impressive is the fact that the text echoes John’s thought

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<sup>57</sup> *Artem.* 42.1-11.

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.* 42.17.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.* 42.18-22.

<sup>60</sup> Brubaker and Haldon 2011: 41: ‘According to Julian (who himself apparently followed the position mapped by the third-century neo-Platonic philosopher Porphyrius), material images were created as expressions of divine essences which were otherwise imperceptible to humankind except through this particular form. Cult statues were images by means of which the celestial divinities could be grasped by the human intellect. Christianised, and transferred from statues to paintings, this argument lived well into the ninth century – as we shall see, it is a major theme of the iconophile defence of sacred portraits.’ The text they cite reads as follows: ‘ἀγάλματα γὰρ καὶ βωμοὺς καὶ πυρὸς ἀσβέστου φυλακὴν καὶ πάντα ἀπλῶς τὰ τοιαῦτα σύμβολα οἱ πατέρες ἔθεντο τῆς παρουσίας τῶν θεῶν, οὐχ ἵνα ἐκεῖνα θεοὺς νομίσωμεν, ἀλλ’ ἵνα δι’ αὐτῶν τοὺς θεοὺς θεραπεύσωμεν.’ (Julian, *Letter to a Priest*, 308).

about the relationship between images and the prototype they depict in the context of the iconoclast controversy. For A. Kazhdan, who, despite his doubts about John's authorship of the *Passion of St Artemius*, dated it to the Iconoclast period, Julian's remark is possibly a sign of the ongoing debate about icon veneration.<sup>61</sup> More evidence could be brought forward to support Kazhdan's hypothesis. It is well known that in his theological works John tries to differentiate between the veneration of icons and the honour or worship<sup>62</sup> attributed to the person depicted. His argument is summarised well by a quotation from Basil which appears repeatedly in the three treatises *Against the Iconoclasts* and elsewhere: ἡ γὰρ τῆς εἰκόνοσ τιμὴ πρὸς τὸ πρωτότυπον διαβαίνει.<sup>63</sup> The similarity of the sentence, both in meaning and, to some extent, phrasing, with Julian's statement above points to a general iconophile background to the *Passion of St Artemius* but also to a more specific familiarity with the terminology employed during the controversy which would immediately attract the audience's attention.

This is not the only feature that can be thought of as evidence of a certain anti-iconoclast tone to the *Passion*. The reference to St Basil is only one element in a long list of biblical and patristic quotations on which John builds his argument in his anti-iconoclast works. John is eager to demonstrate that the veneration of icons is deeply rooted in the tradition of the church. He explains that he has undertaken to write his treatise with the 'preservation (συντήρησιν) of the ordinances of the Church' in mind, since even the slightest deviation from the ecclesiastical 'tradition' (παράδοσιν) can prove extremely harmful.<sup>64</sup> Through the hatred for icons, the devil attempts to disturb the peace of the Church and shake the hearts of the unstable 'from the true customs, handed down from the Fathers' (ἐκ τῆς ἀληθοῦς καὶ

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<sup>61</sup> Kazhdan 1988: 204.

<sup>62</sup> Depending on whether it is a saint or Christ who is depicted.

<sup>63</sup> *Imag.* I.21.41-2; III.15.8-9; also in I.35.6 (II.31.6; III.48.6) the whole passage from Basil is cited; *Exp.* 89.8 and 89.48.

<sup>64</sup> *Imag.* I.2.3 and 2.19.

πατροπαραδότου συνηθείας), by ‘mixing evil with divine words’.<sup>65</sup> This insistence on tradition finds a parallel in the dialogue between Julian and Artemius in a series of passages which do not form part of the original *passion* but have been inserted by John. Julian blames Constantine I for the religious innovations he introduced (περὶ τὴν θρησκείαν ἐνεωτέρισεν) and calls Artemius to return ‘to the ancestral and most ancient and long-standing religion’ of the Romans and Greeks.<sup>66</sup> In his address to the emperor, Artemius replies that he will remain firm in what he was taught and will hold fast to the ‘ancestral traditions’ (πατρικαῖς παραδόσεσιν), ‘even if some craftiness should be discovered by the depths of our wits’.<sup>67</sup> This last phrase, borrowed from Euripides,<sup>68</sup> recalls the habit of the iconoclasts to dress their blasphemous teachings with divine words ‘through unjust lips and a treacherous tongue’, as John describes in *Imag.* III.1.39-40. Both Julian and Artemius base the validity of their faith on the tradition in the same way that the iconoclasts and John invoked the Scripture and the Fathers to support their views.<sup>69</sup>

Does Julian represent the iconoclast emperors and the novelties they introduced? It has been noted before that the iconoclast emperors were identified with the Apostate in iconophile literature.<sup>70</sup> Julian certainly adopts ‘iconoclastic’ practices in the *Passion of St Artemius*, in passages which once again are absent from the original *Passio Artemii*. He orders the relics of St Babylas to be removed from Daphne (*Artem.* 55), and during the persecution he unleashes against the Christians, the pagan population burns the relics of John

<sup>65</sup> *Imag.* II.4.10; II.4.7.

<sup>66</sup> *Artem.* 43.5; 43.20-1: ἐπὶ τὴν πάτριον καὶ ἀρχαιοτάτην καὶ πολυχρόνιον Ῥωμαίων τε καὶ Ἑλλήνων θρησκείαν.

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.* 47.27-31.

<sup>68</sup> *Bacchae* 203. The whole passage reads [Teiresias talking to Kadmos]: “We mortals have no cleverness in the eyes of the the gods. Our ancestral traditions, and those which we have held throughout our lives, no argument will overturn, not even if some craftiness should be discovered by the depths of our wits” (200-3).

<sup>69</sup> For the Iconoclasts’ reliance on tradition, see the text of the ‘Epitome of the Definition of the Iconoclastic Conciliabulum held in Constantinople, A.D. 754’ in Schaff and Wace 1899: 543-6. Also Louth 2002: 195: ‘Theologically, the heart of the iconoclast controversy was a matter of tradition. Did the veneration of icons belong to the tradition of the Church that went back to the Apostles? Or was it an innovation (and therefore a corruption, the conclusion all sides would have drawn)?’

<sup>70</sup> Cameron and Herrin 1984: 26; Brubaker 1999: 230 fn. 143.



the Baptist and destroys a statue of the Saviour (*Artem.* 57). In an illuminating passage in the third treatise against the Iconoclasts which reveals John Damascene's thought, idolatry and iconoclasm are viewed as the two sides of the same coin: 'for it is just as bad not to offer the honour due to those who are worthy, as it is to offer inappropriate glory to the worthless.'<sup>71</sup> Paganism seems to acquire a new meaning: it becomes a reminder of the new iconoclast threat to traditional, orthodox belief. John will note in the introduction to the first treatise: 'For it seems to me a calamity, and more than a calamity, that the Church, adorned with such privileges and arrayed with traditions received from above by the most godly men, should return to the poor elements, afraid where no fear was, and, as if it did not know the true God, be suspicious of the snare of idolatry and therefore decline in the smallest degree from perfection [...].'<sup>72</sup> It is inconceivable for John that idolatry is used as a charge against those who venerate the icons. Once again idolatry acquires contemporary connotations, reincarnated by the heretics. The homily of Artemius cannot, of course, be said to be a work against Iconoclasm. John, however, takes advantage of the main theme of idolatry and creates his own account, different from the original, which contains elements that would allow his audience to ponder on the challenges for their faith and religious customs. We witness something similar around the middle of the third anti-iconoclast treatise, and while describing how the faithful honour, embrace and kiss not only the icons but also the Old and New Testaments and the words of the Fathers, John turns against another traditional enemy of Christianity, the Manichees: 'but the shameful and filthy and unclean writing of the accursed Manichees we spit out and reject as containing the same names, devised for the glory of the devil and his demons and their delight.'<sup>73</sup> The Manichees, mentioned only in these few lines, serve simply as a symbol of the blasphemous and the heretical.

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<sup>71</sup> *Imag.* III.1.16-9 (trans. Louth 2003: 81).

<sup>72</sup> *Imag.* I.2.6-13 (trans. Louth 2003: 20).

<sup>73</sup> *Imag.* III.9a.37-44 (trans. Louth 2003: 90).

Crucially, paganism and heresy in the hagiographic accounts become ‘symbolic’ threats with allusions to the present because of the destructive momentum they gain in the hands of those in positions of power. The tyrannical figures of Julian and Marcianus, whose actions are unequivocally an expression of demonic influence, also have their imitators in John’s world. The *Against the Iconoclasts* again confirms this conviction: ‘For certain have risen up, saying that it is forbidden to make images of the saving miracles and sufferings of Christ and the brave deeds of the saints against the devil, and set them up to be gazed at, so that we might glorify God and be filled with wonder and zeal. Does anyone who has divine knowledge and spiritual understanding not recognize that this is a ruse of the devil (ὑποβολή τοῦ διαβόλου ἐστίν)?’<sup>74</sup> Iconoclasts, the Church’s contemporary enemies, are, like all heretics, the executors of the Devil’s schemes. This includes the Byzantine emperor Leo III under whose reign the tensions about the issue of icon veneration started to escalate. John protests about his authoritarian involvement in religious affairs and the questioning of the unwritten tradition regarding icons:

Since many things have been handed down in unwritten form in the Church and preserved up to now, why do you split hairs over the images? Manichees composed the Gospel according to Thomas; are you now going to write the Gospel according to Leo? I do not accept an emperor who tyrannically snatches at the priesthood. Have emperors received the authority to bind and to loose? I know that Valens was called a Christian emperor and persecuted the Orthodox faith, as well as Zeno and Anastasius, Heraclius and Constantine who [died] in Sicily, and Bardanes Philippicus. I am not persuaded that the church should be constituted by imperial canons, but rather by patristic traditions, both written and unwritten.<sup>75</sup>

Leo III conforms to the prototype of the deceived and domineering ruler against which John warns his audience in his homilies. The fact that Leo ‘snatched tyrannically (τυραννικῶς) at the priesthood’ is reminiscent of the tyrannical rule of lawless governors. It particularly evokes the *Encomium of St John Chrysostom* in which the saint is praised for his attempt to restore justice to the oppressed, for ‘when authority is modelled on the law, it

<sup>74</sup> *Imag.* III.2.11-6 (trans. Louth 2003: 82).

<sup>75</sup> *Imag.* II.16.57-81 (trans. Louth 2003: 73).

becomes kingship, but when it is made up of lawlessness, it is rightly called tyranny / Ἀρχὴ γὰρ νόμῳ τυπουμένη βασιλεία καθίσταται, παρανομία δὲ στοιχειουμένη τυραννὶς οὐκ ἀδίκῳς κατονομάζεται.<sup>76</sup> When law is understood within a Christian context from which it derives its moral value, it is put to the service of the people, otherwise rulers abuse their right to power. John Damascene introduces into the encomium the comparison between Eudoxia and Jezebel, the biblical figure from Kings I and II who claimed the property of a helpless landowner in the name of King Ahab. The comparison was a common motif in hagiographical accounts of John Chrysostom in which Eudoxia/Jezebel constitutes a model of illegitimate and immoral exercise of power.<sup>77</sup> But Jezebel is also encountered in *Against the Iconoclasts* along other pairs of persecutors and persecuted, like Herod and John the Baptist, and John's contemporaries, the emperor Leo III and the exiled iconophile patriarch Germanos of Constantinople (715-730):

Political good order is the concern of emperors, the ecclesiastical constitution that of pastors and teachers. This is a piratical attack, brothers. Saul tore the garment of Samuel, and what happened? God tore from him his kingdom and gave it to David the most meek. Jezebel persecuted Elias, and the dogs bathed in her blood. Herod did away with John, and he gave up his life eaten of worms. And now the blessed Germanus, radiant in his life and his words, is flogged and sent into exile, and many other bishops and fathers, whose names we do not know. Is not this piracy?<sup>78</sup>

It is as if John Chrysostom figured in the encomium as another Germanos who has been persecuted and exiled by the imperial authorities. Or even as John of Damascus himself, whose confrontation with the imperial authorities in his treatises in support of the holy icons demonstrate his unhesitating intervention in religious affairs for which he was eventually anathematised *post mortem* by the robber Council of Hieria (754).

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<sup>76</sup> *Chrys.* 14.27-9.

<sup>77</sup> Holum 1982: 72.

<sup>78</sup> *Imag.* II.12.19-31 (trans. Louth 2003: 69).

In the passages cited above, the interference of civil authorities in the life of the Church is strongly criticised. As Louth notes with regard to *Against the Iconoclasts II*, the treatise constitutes ‘an uncompromising attack on the Emperor for meddling in the affairs of the Church by promoting iconoclasm, an interference that John bluntly calls ‘piracy’.’<sup>79</sup> It is, however, a theme that is also clearly present in the *Passion of St Artemius*, not only implicitly, in the form of the preacher’s rhetorical attack on Julian, but explicitly, in the words of the emperor Valentinian at the end of the homily. John borrows Valentinian’s voice to mark the ‘red line’ which no political authority should cross and by which it is limited to the management of ‘the affairs of the world’. It is a line that was not respected by another emperor: Valens. The name of Valens appears in the *Passion of St Artemius* in relation to the Anomoean heresy and the persecutions and exiles imposed upon the orthodox bishops. But it also forms part of the list of evil emperors in *Against the Iconoclasts II* whose successor Leo becomes by exiling Germanus and other bishops. In the Artemius homily, Valens is one of the godless emperors that follow Julian, not only on the throne but also in terms of his tyrannical policies, although in ‘pseudo-Christian’ guise instead of pagan. However, rather than a mere piece in the puzzle of the historical context of the narrative, his figure is invested with a certain symbolism, that of the impious ruler who threatens the Church, which becomes activated by John in a different context, in this case in his anti-iconoclast treatise, but with the aim of achieving the same effect, namely presenting a model of tyrannical rulership.

John of Damascus’ hagiographic homilies are replete with such models, and his virtuosity as a preacher lies precisely in creating them. John manages to convert the struggles of the saints into powerful statements of defiance against the Ruler and rulers of this world. By appropriately modifying the hagiographic accounts, emphasising underlying themes, and inserting comments, he transforms the saints’ persecutors into vivid examples of the dangers

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<sup>79</sup> Louth 2002: 205.

of uncontrolled political power for Christians. Their arrogant behaviour threatens the existence of the Church and becomes a cause of individual suffering, since their authority is shown to derive from the Devil. Their plotting and intriguing against the faithful Christians, the ‘seeding of weeds’ to which the martyr Eugenius refers,<sup>80</sup> takes on various forms, from paganism and idolatry to heresy and unjust rulership. The consequences are the same in all cases, persecution, but both Barbara and Artemius, and John Chrysostom emerge triumphant through their constancy in faith and in the Christian ethos. John of Damascus, however, does not simply create generic models of power abuse which can be seen reflected, at best, in the historical context of the saints’ accounts. His discourse was formulated in such a way as to also awaken correspondences in his listeners’ minds between these models and contemporary instances of political and religious impudence. His treatises *Against the Iconoclasts* are a source of valuable parallels in this respect between the homilies and John’s rhetoric against iconoclasm. This is not to say, of course, that his hagiographic homilies are to be perceived as direct attacks on the iconoclast movement. Such an approach would be wrong. The anti-iconoclast treatises provide, nonetheless, a penetrating insight into John’s mentality regarding political power and its role in matters of faith which is unequalled by any of his other works. What is more important, one can see that much of the argumentative force of these writings relies on the reproduction of the model of the evil ruler present in the homilies. The diabolically inspired policies, the recurrent relevance of idolatry, the promotion of heresy, the persecution of orthodox bishops, are all elements employed in the refutation of iconoclasm, but in reality they are symbolic weapons used in the clash against secular authorities that encroached in matters of doctrine and practice which were meant to be recognised by the audience and be open to interpretation based on contextual factors.

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<sup>80</sup> See ch. 2, p. 72 .

## 5 | The preacher's self

John's encomia are not simply reworkings of saints' accounts which seek to sharpen the sensitivity of his congregations to the essential presence, both on an individual and communal level, of the ideals and models delineated so far in the previous two chapters. As might be surmised, this functional dimension of homilies as formative represents only one aspect of the preacher's discourse, that of the homily as an externally focused message. The homily, however, is also a message generated internally. As such, it can be approached as a reflection of the preacher's self and can be used to build an image of his personality. The emphasis on the self carries a powerful advantage. It allows us to understand the homily as the conjunction of the intimate experiences of the individual, whose inner world is made accessible to us. The recent interest in audience reception has invigorated the study of sixth- to eighth-century homiletics, constituting a marked departure from approaches which tended to focus on the preacher and favoured an analysis of his theological and exegetical methods.<sup>1</sup> Here I would like to return to the issue of the preacher. However, in contrast to approaches focusing on the homilist's theological perspective and homiletic method, the goal is to bring to the foreground the capacity of the sermon as a locus of personal expression.

Drawing on the narrative sections and encomiastic remarks in John of Damascus' hagiographic homilies, his first-person statements and modelling of the saints' figures, this chapter explores how the preacher's self emerges in his homilies on two different levels. On the one hand, John's preaching conveys thoughts and emotions, which are often momentary expressions of the stunning impact of the homily's subject on the preacher, and becomes a method for introspection, an act of pondering on questions deeply embedded in his mind. At

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Cunningham and Allen 1998: 2. See also above p. 11 for bibliographical notes.

the same time, the preacher's personal experiences are reflected in the accounts of the saints' lives, revealing to us his view of himself as a monastic, as a theologian and defender of the faith, and as a preacher with pastoral responsibilities.

In presenting the topic of the homilist's self it is first necessary to show that a discussion of the self in the Damascenean homilies has some reasonable and justified basis. At the outset, a brief clarification of the rationale for the use of the term is in order. The body of literature on the self is enormous, reflecting the historical and cultural richness in conceptualisations of the self.<sup>2</sup> Equally extensive is the range of meanings and nuances the notion of self has acquired over time, to the point that modern theory has even called into question the existence of such a thing as the self.<sup>3</sup> Whatever interpretation of the self one may proffer, the concept itself, as the persistent philosophical and scholarly debate proves, has been a convenient construct around which many aspects of the human understanding of the person are organised.

The Byzantines also gave their own meaning to the concept of the self and had a distinct way of expressing it. Conceptions of the self were already strongly present in early Greek thought, not only in the more systematic theses of prominent thinkers, such as in Plato's stress on the pre-eminence of intellect, and Aristotle's view of the human being as a composite of form and matter, but also among the verses of epic and tragic poetry.<sup>4</sup> Ideas of

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<sup>2</sup> For a useful introduction to the topic, see Gallagher 2011. The persistent efforts of Byzantinists to make known the misreadings and distortions of the past of matters Byzantine and revitalise discussion of aspects previously ignored have exposed in starker terms the elusiveness of the Byzantine self until very recently. To be sure, Byzantine concepts of the self have not received the attention given to philosophical approaches to selfhood in Hellenistic and Roman times, nor has there been any similar endeavour with regard to the eastern Christian background to the self which underpins Byzantine notions of individuality. There is, however, an increasing interest in areas which presuppose and treat the self or personal discourse, such as autobiography, authorship and liturgy. See, for instance, Angold 1998; Hinterberger 2000; Krueger 2014; Papaioannou 2013 (esp. chapter 4) and 2015.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Metzinger 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Scholars dealing with the question of the self and selfhood in antiquity have often commented on the peculiarities that the absence of a noun (or nominal) for the 'self' implies for the modern researcher, even though the pronoun *autos* is used with reflexive function (see Struck 2005: 109-110; Remes 2007: 3-4). The lack of an equivalent term in Greek poses the problem of lexical correspondence, but on the other hand, it is difficult

self continued to proliferate in the stimulating intellectual environment in the schools of thought of the Hellenistic and Roman periods, and as with many aspects of the Greco-Roman tradition, were subsequently inherited by Christian thinkers to express their own preoccupations about the human being.<sup>5</sup>

The philosophical and religious literature of the imperial period gives an authentic testimony to the centrality to the late antique thought of the quest for an elucidation of the 'I'. Steeped in existential anguish, Gregory of Nazianzus cries out: 'Τίς γενόμεν, τίς δ' εἰμί, τί δ' ἔσσομαι; Οὐ σάφα οἶδα.'<sup>6</sup> 'Who am I?' – not only in the now, but also beyond the temporal confines of the present life – is the question Gregory's mind labours to answer. Stoics, Neoplatonists and other early Christian thinkers also expressed similar anxieties about human identity. While differing in their positions, they all intersected, as P. C. Miller has noted, in the conviction that ultimately the question is not 'undecidable'.<sup>7</sup> The outcome of Gregory's leap into an inner debate of who he is is also conclusive. In his speech of welcome to a ship crew from Egypt, Gregory exclaims with startling boldness: 'I dare to utter something, o Trinity; and may pardon be granted to my folly, for the risk is to my soul. I too am an image (εἰκών) of God, of the heavenly glory, though I am placed on earth.'<sup>8</sup> For Gregory the background of his self-understanding is recapitulated in his existence in accordance to the image of God (κατ' εἰκόνα θεοῦ).

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to go quite so far as to dismiss discussions of the 'self' as irrelevant. Though surely we are to rely on 'an importation of non-native categories' (Struck 2005: 110), the notion of the self is not reducible to lexical items and grammatical constructions

<sup>5</sup> For a comprehensive study on ancient thinking about the self, see Gill 1996 and 2006; Sorabji 2006; Martin and Barresi 2006. See also the volumes Brakke, Satlow and Weitzman 2005, with an emphasis on Jewish and Christian conceptions of the topic, and Remes and Sihvola 2008, which includes Islamic ideas of self. For individual perspectives, see for Plotinus, Remes 2007; Eustathius of Antioch, Cartwright 2015: 75-140; Gregory of Nazianzus, Papaioannou 2006: 59-81; Psellos, Papaioannou 2013; Theodoret, Rousseau 2005.

<sup>6</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus, *Carm. moral.* 14, PG 37.757.

<sup>7</sup> Miller 2005: 16. Miller's interesting comparative insight into how different late antique thinkers (Plotinus, Origen, Proclus, Victricius of Rouen) thought of how they could best orient their self away from distractions demonstrates that reflections about interiority went beyond the basic question of what the self is.

<sup>8</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 34, 12.1-3: 'Τολμῶ τι φθέγξασθαι, ὦ Τριάς, καὶ συγγνώμη τῇ ἀπονοίᾳ· περὶ ψυχῆς γὰρ ὁ κίνδυνος. Εἰκὼν εἰμί καὶ αὐτὸς Θεοῦ, τῆς ἄνω δόξης, εἰ καὶ κάτω τέθειμαι.'



The κατ' εἰκόνα creation of the first man is manifested in the divine gift of the immaterial soul. John Damascene's *On the Orthodox Faith* presents with sharp dogmatic clarity the core of patristic anthropology:

Since this was the case, with his own hands he [God] created man after his own image and likeness from the visible and invisible natures. From the earth he formed his body and by his own inbreathing gave him a rational and understanding soul, which last we say is the divine image (ὅπερ δὴ θεϊὰν εἰκόνα φαμέν), for the 'according to his image' means the intellect and free will, while the 'according to his likeness' means such likeness in virtue as is possible.<sup>9</sup>

The soul constitutes the invisible component of human nature which owes its provenance to God's own breath, elsewhere identified as the 'life-giving and creative' Spirit,<sup>10</sup> and defines humans as images of the divine. In this way, God is not external to human existence but becomes an intrinsic point of reference for the human self. Ultimately, every human, compounded of soul and body, which forms the material factor of existence, is free to pursue full communion with God, become 'like' him, in what is referred to in patristic literature as 'deification' (θέωσις). The pervasiveness of this view of the human as a mixture of a visible and an invisible nature would make John claim that man's creation 'had to be' such (ἔδει), so that nobody may question the will of the creator and ask 'Why have you made me thus?' The uncertainty expressed in this last question quoted from Paul's *Letter to the Romans*,<sup>11</sup> echoing Gregory's 'Who am I?', is neutralised by the force of 'ἔδει'. The human self and its relation to God is for the Byzantine mind a matter that is settled and answered through divine revelation.

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<sup>9</sup> *Expos.* 26.16-21: Ἐπεὶ δὲ ταῦτα οὕτως εἶχεν, ἐξ ὁρατῆς τε καὶ ἀοράτου φύσεως δημιουργεῖ τὸν ἄνθρωπον οἰκείαις χερσὶ κατ' εἰκόνα τε καὶ ὁμοίωσιν, ἐκ γῆς μὲν τὸ σῶμα διαπλάσας, ψυχὴν δὲ λογικὴν καὶ νοερὰν διὰ τοῦ οἰκείου ἐμφυσήματος δοὺς αὐτῷ, ὅπερ δὴ θεϊὰν εἰκόνα φαμέν· τὸ μὲν γὰρ «κατ' εἰκόνα» τὸ νοερὸν δηλοῖ καὶ αὐτεξούσιον, τὸ δὲ «καθ' ὁμοίωσιν» τὴν τῆς ἀρετῆς κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν ὁμοίωσιν. (trans. Chase 1958: 234-5).

<sup>10</sup> *Sabbat.* 6.1-5: Ἐσχατον δὲ πάντων ὥσπερ τινὰ βασιλέα τὸ πολυθύλλητον ζῶον τὸν ἄνθρωπον οἰκείᾳ χειρὶ καὶ εἰκόνι τιμώμενον ἐκ γῆς μὲν τὸ σῶμα διαρτίσας, τὴν δὲ ψυχὴν τῷ θεῷ δημιουργήσας καὶ ζωοποιῶ ἐμφυσήματι, ὃ δὴ φημι τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, τὸ ζωοποιὸν καὶ δημιουργὸν καὶ τελειοῦν καὶ ἀγιάζον τὰ σύμπαντα.

<sup>11</sup> *Rm* 9, 20: Τί με ἐποίησας οὕτως;

Byzantine attitudes to self are dominated by affirmative statements about the body and the soul, but we should not minimise the importance of views about what the self is not. By the time of John of Damascus, one of the hallmarks of mainstream Christianity was the assumption that one's self cannot be another man's self. The 'distinctiveness' of the self became a hotly contested issue in the first Christian centuries given the wide diffusion of Neoplatonic ideas about the incarnation and transmigration of the soul and their influence on Christian thinkers. The discourse of distinctiveness, of course, is first and foremost apparent in theological debates on *hypostasis* and the distinction of the three persons of the Trinity.<sup>12</sup> Although trinitarian unity and community were the *sine qua non* of Byzantine Christianity, the emphasis upon *hypostases* was meant to safeguard the particularity of the persons. The distinctiveness that the term *hypostasis* implies becomes evident in philosophical definitions. In the seventh century, Maximus the Confessor would speak of 'hypostasis' and 'individual' as two similar terms which describe distinct persons.<sup>13</sup> John of Damascus also provided similar definitions.<sup>14</sup> Distinctiveness is fundamental to the understanding of the Byzantine self. Transformation of the self, of course, is not excluded; this is in fact the whole point of Christian discourse, as summarised in the concept of *θέωσις*.<sup>15</sup> But one cannot be transformed ontologically into someone else's self. John Damascene's attack on the doctrine of transmigration in the *Passion of St Artemius* is telling:

Καὶ Πυθαγόρας μὲν καὶ Ἑρμῆς τὰς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ψυχὰς εἰς τὸν ἄδου πυθμένα κατὰγουσι, μετεμψυχώσεις δὲ τινὰς καὶ μεταγγισμοὺς παρεισάγοντες, ποτὲ μὲν εἰς ἄλογα ζῶα καὶ θηρία ταύτας

<sup>12</sup> See Papaioannou 2015: 206 with bibliographical notes.

<sup>13</sup> Tollefsen 2008: 128-9.

<sup>14</sup> *Dial. brev.* 11/*fus.* 31. On the topic, see the volume by Torrance and Paschalidis 2018, and especially J.-C. Larchet in *ibid.* 57-77.

<sup>15</sup> Meyendorff 1979: 2 comments: 'The central theme, or intuition, of Byzantine theology is that man's nature is not a static, "closed", autonomous entity, but a dynamic reality, determined in its very existence by its relationship to God. This relationship is seen as a process of ascent and as communion—man, created in the image of God, is called to achieve a "divine similitude"' (quotation taken from Williams 1999: 15). On *θέωσις*, see Russell 2004. For a fresh set of essays on the topic, see Edwards and D-Vasilescu 2017 with a contribution on John of Damascus: Pallis in *ibid.* 173-207.

μετεμβιβάζοντες, ποτὲ δὲ εἰς ἰχθύας καὶ φυτὰ καὶ ἄλλας τινὰς ἐπανακυκλήσεις καὶ περιόδους κατασπῶντες αὐτὰς καὶ ἀπορραπίζοντες.<sup>16</sup>

Pythagoras and Hermes lead the souls of human beings down to the depths of Hades and introduce doctrines about certain metempsychoses and transmigrations, sometimes transferring them into irrational animals and beasts, and sometimes dragging the soul down into fish and plants and beating it about in yet more cycles and revolutions of time.

The issue of the self was furthermore intimately connected with theological perceptions of the body, particularly with regard to its separation from the soul after death. Bodily identity was central to discussions on the resurrection well into the seventh century demonstrating ‘a valorisation of the body as an indispensable and irreducible component of personhood and individuality.’<sup>17</sup>

Theological conceptions of the human self form only part of the Byzantine interiority to which the modern reader has access. How deep-seated self-reflexivity is in Byzantine literature can be seen from the articulation of the self through the infusion of emotions and thoughts into discourse. Soon, however, one stumbles on the problem of the textual self. Selves reach us through texts, and it is now customary to think of the transmitted self as an image or representation of the true self. Derek Krueger writes, ‘Rhetorical criticism in the study of Mediterranean late antiquity and the Middle Ages has challenged the idea that the textual record provides unmediated access to Christians’ interior realities.’<sup>18</sup> Prior to this, he comments that ‘The selves on display in Byzantine Christian hymns, prayers, and sermons are neither historical selves nor transhistorical selves, but rather styles of self-presentation rooted in Byzantine religious culture.’ Writers were expected to filter information about themselves and provide a carefully constructed image of themselves, seeking to fulfil the ideal of the ‘model’ self according to the Christian precepts.

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<sup>16</sup> *Artem.* 30.4-8.

<sup>17</sup> See Papadogiannakis 2014: 142.

<sup>18</sup> Krueger 2014: 9.

Speaking of representations of the self is indeed a useful tool when it comes to understanding the religious and cultural prototypes that shaped the Byzantine person. It is difficult, however, to accept that only ‘styles of self-representation’ have been handed down to us, whereas the true self remains inaccessible. Over-cautiousness regarding the accessibility of the inner life of individuals can be problematic, when it comes to the knowledge of persons who are directly involved in the texts we have at hand, as is, for example, the figure of the homilist. When John of Damascus describes himself as a sinner, how far is this an attempt to create a certain portrait of himself, following accepted norms of piety, or an honest articulation of his self-view? Even if we deny the transmission through the homilies of an inner self and accept that all we possess is culturally sanctioned representations of the self, i.e. model selves, is conformity to them not an aspect of the homilist’s inner self? In his essay on Theodoret of Cyrus, P. Rousseau opts for a more positive attitude toward the distance that separates us from the fifth-century bishop.<sup>19</sup> Theodoret’s own discourse of the self, as detected in his personal correspondence, and the awareness of the need to negotiate the manner and extent to which his inner being is displayed in his relationship with others, in this case through his letters, makes possible, as argued by Rousseau, the fruitful pursuit of components of subjective experience.<sup>20</sup>

The debate is ongoing, and much scepticism remains over the actual possibility of bridging the gap between the presentation of the self and its interior experiences. Since this is not the place to argue against objections to more favourable approaches such as Rousseau’s, I have consciously refrained from a strict distinction between self-representation and the inner self, and its methodological implications. Instead, the concept of the ‘self’ is adopted here as

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<sup>19</sup> Rousseau 2005.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.* 292: ‘Given what we may now say about Theodoret’s commitment to immediacy and a shared social context, and given his sense that the written word spoke with the voice of the writer, I believe that in his correspondence he is not entirely hidden – *dérobé*, as Derrida put it – and that we can find in that correspondence (again, to quote Derrida) something of a *présence naturelle*.’

a tool, which I hope to reorient towards a better knowledge of the preacher, employed to serve the needs of the particular analysis at hand. More specifically, the self is to be understood as an umbrella term that encompasses diverse examples of self-expression and self-perception, as they emerge from the texts, in an attempt to rescue features of the homilist's personality and interiority. As we shall see, the mechanisms for reading the self in the sermons are related both to the analysis of various statements made by the preacher and, given the hagiographic nature of the sermons, the study of the way he recounts the lives of the saints.

### *Tracing the preacher's self*

Even when it does not involve a highly personal and confessional tone, first-person discourse, both in the form of the default first-person voice of the preacher and of the collective 'we', is explicitly self-referential. The proem is usually the first glimpse of John's 'I'. Careful and modest at first, the preacher is bound by the unrelenting persistence of a well-worn rhetorical *topos* to emphasise the reverence and awe with which he has stepped forward to speak:

[...] τῶν μὲν λόγων ἐφάπτομαι, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἀνέδην οὐδὲ συστολῆς ἄτερ, ἀλλὰ τῷ δέει μὲν συστελλόμενος, τῷ δὲ πόθῳ βαλλόμενος, καὶ σοι τῶν σῶν θείων τε καὶ ἱερῶν διδαγμάτων προσφέρω τὰ ἀκροθίνια.<sup>21</sup>

[...] I will undertake this speech, though not unreservedly nor without restraint, but humbled with awe and also struck by desire, and I will offer you the first fruits of your own divine and holy teachings.

The lofty nature of the saints' lives is solemnly imposing, causing δέος, every lightweight or arrogant approach to them showing disrespect. In fact, such is the greatness of the subject matter that the preacher's rhetorical capacity is impaired. The humility *topos* is indispensable:

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<sup>21</sup> *Chrys.* 1.13-6.

John confesses even those who excel him are left impressed and empty-handed by the sheer size of the task at hand:

Καὶ καταπλαγείησαν, οἷμαι, καὶ ἀποροίησαν ἂν πρὸς τὸ τῆς ὑποθέσεως μέγεθος καὶ οἱ λίαν περὶ τὰς τοιαύτας ἐπιστήμας δεινοὶ καὶ τὸν ὅλον ἑαυτῶν βίον περὶ τὰς τοιάσδε τριβὰς καὶ μελέτας ἐσχολακότες καὶ κατανηλωκότες, μὴ ὅτι γε οἱ καθ' ἡμᾶς ἀμαθεῖς τε καὶ ἄπειροι καὶ μὴδ' ἄκρῳ δακτύλῳ, τὸ δὴ λεγόμενον, ταύτης γεγευσμένοι τῆς ἐμπειρίας τε καὶ εὐτεχνίας καὶ λογογραφικῆς σκέψεως.<sup>22</sup>

And even those that are greatly skilled in these areas of knowledge and have devoted and spent their whole life on such studies and pursuits, would be struck, I think, with amazement and be at a loss with the greatness of this account, and even more so those of us who are unlearned and inexperienced and, as the proverb says, have not even tasted with their fingertip such training and skill and rhetorical thinking.

The shallowness of a commonplace apology that is repeated in ever new variations does not cancel out the self-expressive capacity of these very few prefatory first-person remarks. To be able to distinguish sincerity from mechanistic repetition requires a look into the unexpected. The display of humility before the greatness of the homily's subject matter and with regard to the preacher's disproportionate rhetorical inadequacy corresponds very closely to traditional conceptions of literary convention and openly favours the image of the preacher as modest and humble. Nevertheless, that is until more assured statements about the preacher's spiritual role and importance come to complement the image of the humble servant, showing the *topos* to be a more sincere reflection of his thoughts than a static literary convention, as we might initially be inclined to think. For *topoi* cease to be meaningless expressions when placed into a context in which they can be correlated with other elements of the homilist's discourse. This context is provided by statements of John's awareness of the depth of his influential ministry and of the responsibilities that came with it: neither astonishment and perplexity, nor faint-heartedness or idleness should prevent him from spreading the fruits of his sermons:

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<sup>22</sup> *Barb.* 1.4-10.

Ἀλλ' οὐ παρὰ τοῦτο πάντα πρὸς τὴν τοῦ λόγου ἐγχείρησιν οἶονεῖ πως ἱλιγγιάσαντες καὶ δειλία συσχεθέντες καὶ κατοκνήσαντες ἡμᾶς γε αὐτοὺς καὶ τὸ παρὸν φιλήκοον ἀκροατήριον ἀμοίρους τῆς ἐκ τηλικούτων ἀγώνων περιπετείας ὡς εἰκὸς προσγενομένης ὠφελείας παντελῶς καταλείψωμεν.<sup>23</sup>

But regarding the delivery of this speech, this should by no means be a reason for leaving ourselves and the present keen audience completely deprived of the benefit that naturally comes from such an ordeal, as if we were somehow confused and constrained by cowardice and held back by sluggishness.

The pronouncement of his authority is even more key to his effectiveness as a preacher. John makes his personality present in the sermon and is conscious of the recognition he enjoys. When he mentions, for example, his superior's invitation to come forward and preach, he asserts his fame as speaker: 'πρὸς δὲ καὶ φιλοθέου ἀνδρὸς οὐκ ἀπωστέον / and because, in addition, I should not reject the exhortation of a God-loving man'.<sup>24</sup> Such deviations from traditional norms of humility do not cease to be an integral part of a coherent first-person discourse. In fact, they exist side by side with his claims to humility, demonstrating that what we deal with is not mere rhetorical conventions but a projection of his self-view built upon these conventions.<sup>25</sup>

John also injects emotion into his sermons, enough to produce a heartfelt sensation of personal empathy with the narrated events that moreover sustains a bond of shared experience between him and the audience. Giving voice to his and his listeners' emotional state at the moment of St Barbara's brutal punishment by her father, John asks in rhetorical astonishment:

Ἀλλὰ τί θαυμάζομεν, ἀδελφοί, τοὺς τῇ πλάνῃ τῆς ἀσεβείας μεθύοντας καὶ τῇ τοῦ Σατανᾶ μανίᾳ ἐκβεβακχυμένους;<sup>26</sup>

But why marvel, brethren, at those who are drunk with the folly of impiety and filled with the bacchic frenzy of Satan?

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<sup>23</sup> *Barb.* 1.10-4.

<sup>24</sup> *Chrys.* 1.12-3.

<sup>25</sup> See also Alexakis 2005 for a discussion of John's use and reversal of the humility *topos* in his orations *Against the Iconoclasts*.

<sup>26</sup> *Barb.* 15.11-2.

Sometimes emotion is heightened into visual dramatisation. John Chrysostom's first exile and the multitude of people deprived of their spiritual leader is a saddening and heartbreaking affair:

Ἦ πῶς ἀδακρυτὶ τὴν ἀνήκεστον ἐκτραγωδήσαιμι συμφορὰν; Οὐδὲ λιθίνη γὰρ καρδία μὴ δακρύνει ἐπὶ ταύτῃ δυνήσεται, ἐπεὶ καὶ λίθος ῥάβδῳ Μωσαϊκῇ ῥαπιζομένη ἐξέχεε νάματα καὶ καρδία στερόρᾳ τῷ μεγέθει πληγεῖσα τῆς τραγωδίας ποταμηδὸν ἐκχεῖ δακρύων κρουνοὺς.<sup>27</sup>

How could I describe without tears this unbearable misfortune? Even a heart of stone would be unable not to shed tears; for when Moses struck the stone with his staff, it poured water; and so a tough heart will shed streams of tears like rivers when it is struck by the size of this tragedy.

No witness of this most unjust tragedy (τραγωδίας) can be unaffected. The preacher, himself an imaginary spectator of the saint's banishment, cannot withhold his tears. John, however, is not a mere spectator. He stages a narrative performance through which he revives and puts into words the saint's drama (ἐκτραγωδήσαιμι – note the wordplay with the root τραγωδία). He is the main actor, shedding tears and making his own spectators shed tears. It is a rare moment of evident meta-theatricality. The incitement and display of emotions constituted a form of symbolic language, which influenced the reaction of an audience with regard to certain events or issues of theological and spiritual character.<sup>28</sup> But the visualisation of his emotions marks the preacher as genuinely affected by the saint's misfortunes. The evocation of emotion is self-reflective, which is what also maximises its effect on the audience. John, however, reveals his emotions only sparingly. Furthermore, he expresses emotion primarily in relation to the subjects of his homilies and the narration of their lives, as already seen, for example, in the *Encomium of St John Chrysostom*: 'τῷ δέει μὲν συστελλόμενος, τῷ δὲ πόθῳ βαλλόμενος / humbled with awe and also struck by desire'.<sup>29</sup> Πόθος strikes a note of personal

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<sup>27</sup> *Chrys.* 17.12-6.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, Papadogiannakis 2017a and 2017b on the emotional impact of the fall of Jerusalem. On the use of emotions in Marian homilies of the Middle Byzantine period, including by John of Damascus, see Tsironis 2011; on tears, specifically, as a sign of repentance, Krueger 2014: 208-12.

<sup>29</sup> *Chrys.* 1.14-5. See p. 164 above.



impulsiveness, which in the *Passion of St Artemius* becomes tyrannical, occupying John's mind:

Ὡσπερ οὖν οὐδὲ αὐτὸς ἐγὼ ἀρκούντως ἔχω καὶ ἱκανῶς πρὸς τὴν τοῦ λόγου διήγησιν, κἂν ὁ πόθος τοῦ μάρτυρος κατέλκη καὶ τυραννῇ μου τὸν λογισμὸν καὶ πρὸς τὸ λέγειν βιάζεται<sup>30</sup>

Just as, then, not even I myself am adequate and competent to narrate the story, even if my love for the martyr attracts me and dominates my thought and forces me to speak

Apart from the instances of first-person discourse and the expression of emotions, the appreciation of hagiography as a manifestation of the homilist's inner self is indebted to the fact that hagiographic narratives are pervaded by the unifying purpose of praise and exemplarity. Such a fixed orientation has implications for the relationship between preacher and subject. The *laudandus* enjoys a privileged status which dominates the homily. The preacher is confronted with the idealised saint. His inferiority to his extraordinary subject demands that he deflects attention away from him, despite being the agent of the discourse, to focus on the protagonist of his discourse. The two major concomitants of the dissimilarity between preacher and saint are that the preacher enters into an inevitable comparison with the saint, and that his presence in the homily becomes a matter of negotiation and balancing.

The juxtaposition of saint and preacher foregrounds humbleness as the latter's inward disposition towards the subject and as the foundational framework in which he ought to understand himself. John's pious subordination to the holy protagonists of his homilies is accentuated in the *Encomium of St Barbara* in which he eagerly concedes the martyr the role of protector (προστάτιδα), requesting her to inspect (ἐποπτεύουσα) with compassion him and everyone who seeks her.<sup>31</sup> Watchful attention is what he also pleads John Chrysostom for (ἐποπτεύοις ἡμᾶς).<sup>32</sup> The acknowledgement of the saints' sympathetic superiority is synonymous with spiritual maturity: John recognises the characteristics of sainthood and duly

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<sup>30</sup> *Artem.* 2.2-3.

<sup>31</sup> *Barb.* 23.12 and 23.1.

<sup>32</sup> *Chrys.* 19.12.

places himself under the protection of the saints. In his chapter on saints and relics in the *On the Orthodox Faith*, John emphasises the honour owed to the ‘friends of Christ’ for being ‘sons’ and ‘inheritors’ of God, for becoming ‘gods’ and ‘kings’ by grace, ‘living temples of God’.<sup>33</sup> John’s instinctive reaction is unrestrained respect to ‘the most sensible of one’s fellow-servants [i.e. the saints]’.<sup>34</sup> The dividing line which John unpretentiously draws between the saints and himself reveals a man with an inner awareness of himself and his place in relation to God and the saints. It also reveals that as a preacher, he based his teaching on principles rooted in his conscience. It is not the prevalence of traditional stylistic conventions that exclusively forms his encomia; his attitude towards the subject of his homily is dictated by conscious religious experience.

Holiness had a magnetic allure which invited imitation of the radiant holy man and, in essence, of the one and only unrivalled exemplar of holiness, Christ himself, ultimately effecting the experiencing of what P. Brown called *repraesentatio Christi*, transforming oneself into a representative of Christ in the present.<sup>35</sup> At the heart of this spiritual exercise lay the laborious task of assuming the traits of the restored human nature as represented by the saints. In the same chapter of the *On the Orthodox Faith* discussed above, John enumerates the most exceptional saintly virtues.<sup>36</sup> But even before one penetrates into the horizons of the struggle for interior perfection, a crucial prerequisite takes precedence: one’s actual willingness to explore the inherent potential of *mimesis*. The words ἀναθεωρῶ and ζηλῶ, which form John’s concluding exhortation in his commentary on the saints, express in plain terms the obvious, yet all-important fact of examining and desiring the divine likeness

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<sup>33</sup> *Expos.* 88.13-22.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.* 88.20.

<sup>35</sup> Brown 1983: 8.

<sup>36</sup> *Expos.* 88.81-4: ‘Τούτων πάντων ἀναθεωροῦντες τὴν πολιτείαν ζηλώσωμεν τὴν πίστιν, τὴν ἀγάπην, τὴν ἐλπίδα, τὸν ζῆλον, τὸν βίον, τὴν καρτερίαν τῶν παθημάτων, τὴν ὑπομονὴν μέχρις αἵματος, ἵνα καὶ τῶν τῆς δόξης στεφάνων αὐτοῖς κοινωνήσωμεν.’ (Let us observe the manner of life of all these and let us zealously emulate their faith, love, hope, zeal, life, endurance of suffering, and perseverance unto death, so that we may also share with them the crowns of glory; trans. adapted from Chase 1958: 370).

of the saints. They imply, in other words, personal initiative and serve to remind that imitation is something to be acquired. Besides, the necessity of exhortation is itself an indication that imitation of the holy is not something inherent to the human self. In this way, a defining aspect of Christian hagiography and theology is put in its proper perspective, not treated as a repeated *topos*, but given a deeper meaning associated with the issue of personal choice. Imitation, as understood by John of Damascus, is an internal process, often taken for granted in hagiographic discourse but revealing a clear expression of self-consciousness.

John is also the tacit initiator of the mimetic process in his sermons, unfolding the events of the saints' lives (ὕποθεσιν ἀνελίττοντι)<sup>37</sup> and bringing into view their achievements (εἰς τὸ φανερόν ἀγαγεῖν).<sup>38</sup> The verbal re-enactment of the saints' experiences activates the paradigmatic effect of the sermons upon the attendants. It is an effect, however, which is not mediated by an uninvolved and detached preacher; the preacher is rather the first to be exposed to the influence of the subject as a model for imitation. John reveals a self that can be moulded, and admits that sin occupies his soul and body:

Εὔρομι δέ σε καὶ τῶν ἐμῶν ψυχικῶν καὶ σωματικῶν μολώπων προσηνῇ θεραπεύτριαν καὶ πάσαις ταῖς περιστατικαῖς θλίψεσι ἐτοιμοτάτην προστάτιδα. Κάμοῦ τῶν παθῶν στήσας γαληνῶς τὰς ὁρμὰς καὶ σκιρτήματα, ἵνα καὶ τὸν βίον, πρὸς ᾧ δεῖ ῥυθμίσας, καὶ τὸν κοσμικὸν ἀναχειμάστως περαιώσας κλύδωνα πρὸς ζωὴν τὴν ἀγήρω καὶ λιμένα σωτήριον προσορμίσας τύχοιμι διὰ σοῦ ἐπὶ τοῖς ἀμέτροις πλημμελήμασι τοῦ κοινοῦ καὶ εὐσπλάγχχνου κριτοῦ ἀφιέντος μᾶλλον καὶ συγχωροῦντος διὰ τὴν σὴν πρεσβείαν καὶ ἔντευξιν ἥδη τὴν ἐμὴν ῥαθυμίαν ἐνδίκως καταψηφιζομένου καὶ κατακρίνοντος.<sup>39</sup>

May I also find in you a kind attendant to the bruises of my soul and body, and a most ready protector against all circumstantial afflictions. And check gently the impulses and leaps of my passions, in order that I may correct my life according to what is right, and serenely cross the rough seas of this world toward the ageless life; and anchored in a saving harbour, may it come to pass that, through you, our common and merciful judge overlooks and even forgives my countless trespasses with the help of your intercession and acquaintance with him, although he has already justly condemned and passed his sentence against my sluggishness.

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<sup>37</sup> *Chrys.* 1.17.

<sup>38</sup> *Artem.* 3.8.

<sup>39</sup> *Barb.* 23.10-18.

In one of the most self-revealing passages in his hagiographic homilies, John exhibits contrition for his passions and for the ‘bruises of his soul and body’. The transformation of the self will be effected through the saint (διὰ σοῦ). John requests the saint’s help because he recognises her state of perfection. But the help comes through imitation, an act that precisely presupposes the knowledge of one’s failings.

### *John as a monk, theologian, and preacher*

Homilies provide a great deal of information about the preacher, from his thoughts and emotions arising from the contemplation of a homily’s subject to life-encompassing ideas about his place in the world. As we have seen, there is no single way by which these expressions of the preacher’s vision are conveyed and may be understood. The rhetorical and literary devices employed by John Damascene, the analysis of underlying themes, and the comparative reading of John’s texts, are all methods that provide access to the preacher’s self. This self, moreover, is not a monolithic entity, but a conjunction of self-perceptions and their manifestations. Through an analysis of the saints’ narratives and the preacher’s interventions, the homilies reveal, for instance, the influence of monasticism on John and the building of a monastic self, strikingly, though not exclusively, present in the *Encomium of St John Chrysostom*.

The story of John Chrysostom’s ascetic initiation opens with his withdrawal from the place that nurtured him, the buzzing city of Antioch:

Ἐτῶν ἦν ὡς τριάκοντα καὶ οὕτως ἅμα ἐν τῇ τελειότητι τῆς τε σωματικῆς καὶ πνευματικῆς ἡλικίας γενόμενος καὶ τῶν θείων λόγων ἀναγνώστης προαχθεὶς ὁμοῦ καὶ διδάσκαλος, ῥύμη θείου ἔρωτος πρὸς τὴν ἔρημον μετανίσταται σφριγῶσαν τὴν σάρκα καὶ φλοιδοῦσαν τοῖς πάθεσι καταμαράναι βουλόμενος,

ὥς ἂν μὴ τὸ κρεῖττον δουλωθεῖ τῷ χείρονι· ἄμφω γὰρ κατ' ἀλλήλων ἐπιθυμεῖ καὶ ἡ φθορὰ τοῦ σκηνώματος εἰκότως τῇ ψυχῇ τὴν ἐπικράτειαν δίδωσι.<sup>40</sup>

He was about thirty years old, and thus, having arrived at the perfect stage of his physical and spiritual age and been promoted reader and teacher of the divine scriptures, removed himself to the desert (ἐρημον) by a rush of divine eros, since he wanted to wither his flesh, vigorous as it was and seething with passions, lest the better become enslaved to the worse; for both desire to turn against each other, although the corruption of the body naturally hands control over to the soul.

The city's surrounding mountains, which were home to monastic communities and solitary cells, became John Chrysostom's refuge from the temptations of society when he arrived at the age of maturity. On Mount Silpios, he subordinated himself to a spiritual guide for four years before eventually deciding to abandon communal living and retreating to a remote cave for another two years.<sup>41</sup> To the wilderness that served as the saint's home for more than half a decade, the preacher attaches a symbolic meaning: John's monastic setting is the 'desert'. Figuring prominently in the patristic literature of the late antiquity and the writings of the Desert Fathers, desert spirituality permeated accounts of holiness.<sup>42</sup> Ἐρημος became synonymous to the struggle for the harnessing of body and spirit. For John Chrysostom, the barrenness of the landscape was his ally for the mortification of his passions.

Simultaneously, the desert signified spiritual fertility. In the *Encomium of St Barbara*, John of Damascus casts the young saint's seclusion in the tower in a new light:

Αὐτόθι οὖν διαιτωμένη, ἄτερ τῶν ἔξωθεν θορύβων ἀφησυχάσασα, λογισμοὺς ἀνεκίνει θεοσεβεῖς, καὶ τούτους ἐγεώργει, καὶ ἔτρεφεν· οἶδεν γὰρ ἐρημία, ἐννοιῶν ἰσχνῶν, καὶ μεγαλοφρεστᾶτων μήτηρ καθίστασθαι.<sup>43</sup>

So she lived there, in silence, away from external noises, and contemplated and cultivated (ἐγεώργει) and nurtured (ἔτρεφεν) god-fearing thoughts, because she knew that solitude (ἐρημία) was the mother of fine and lofty concepts.

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<sup>40</sup> Chrys. 8.10-6.

<sup>41</sup> For John Chrysostom's early life and monastic years, see Kelly 1995: 1-35 and Liebeschuetz 2011: 124-32.

<sup>42</sup> In addition to the primary sources and secondary literature cited in chapter 3 (p. 112, fn. 49), see also Burton-Christie 1993 and Goehring 1999.

<sup>43</sup> Barb. 7.9-11.

Ἐρημία, a cognate of ἔρημος, corresponds to the enlightenment that accompanies solitariness. But the semantic capacity of the word is not limited to the meaning of ‘solitude’. John transforms the tower into a desert. The juxtaposition of the concepts of cultivation and nurturing with ἐρημία demonstrates clearly the preacher’s endeavour to associate his subject with the values of desert asceticism. As has been observed, ‘the desert is not only a privileged space for inscribing images that originate from the outside [...]; it is also something we project on places. Thus, while the sandy (or rocky) solitudes of the Bible and the Desert Fathers were physically confined to the southern shore of the Mediterranean, the desert myth of the renunciation of the world moved far beyond it.’<sup>44</sup> John Chrysostom is the city dweller that seeks the harshness of the desert to root out his passions. Barbara, on the other hand, is the pious young woman to whose urban ἐρημία the spiritual fruits of the ἔρημος are transferred. The paradoxical antithesis inherent to the desert as an inhospitable arena and a fertile field is thus beautifully reconciled in the same word root, while the desert *topos* is being applied by the preacher to the circumstances of both saints.

A focus on John of Damascus’ sources for the biography of the two saints illuminates how he constructs the introspective and uplifting atmosphere of the desert. Comparison with Palladius’ *Dialogus de vita Ioannis Chrysostomi*, from which the aforementioned extract on John Chrysostom’s retreat to the wilderness is adapted,<sup>45</sup> reveals the stark absence of the symbolically charged ‘ἔρημος’. Palladius’ text speaks of the saint’s flight to ‘the nearby mountains’, something which John of Damascus also mentions later on.<sup>46</sup> John, however, employs the word for desert and combines it eloquently with vocabulary that recalls the mortifying power of the arid landscape (καταμαράναι) and images of the decaying body (φλοιδοῦσαν; φθορά), which the flesh-mortifying desert helps to suppress. The use and

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<sup>44</sup> Della Dora 2016: 138.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. example in chapter 2, p. 60-1.

<sup>46</sup> Palladius, *Dialogus* PG 47.18: καταλαμβάνει τὰ πλησίον ὄρη; *Chrys.* 8.17: τοῖς πέλας προσομιλήσας ὄρεσιν.

elaboration of the desert *topos* provides John Chrysostom with a richly visualised ascetic background which amounts to an organic connection between the saint and the place of his ascesis. John of Damascus persists in this pattern in the *Encomium of St Barbara*. There the tower-as-desert image does not reproduce the content of the original *passion* but constitutes a literary innovation. Silence (ἀφῆσυχάσασα) and solitude (ἐρημία), a *topos* of desert depictions, is extended to Barbara's urban environment, allowing John to assert the inhospitable as a force of spiritual exercise and self-formation.

John of Damascus' treatment of the desert reflects a deeper understanding of the physical and spiritual sway of the desert over the self, a reality of which he himself was conscious. The introduction of desert-related commonplaces into the saints' narratives – notably in the case of Barbara, who evidently lacked a monastic background – cannot be viewed only as stylistically motivated but as forming part of a wider diffusion of monastic values into the homilies. John's sympathy for the desert and the monastic ideals it embodies recalls vividly his own personal experience. One cannot fail to notice the striking parallels found in the homilies. John of Damascus removed himself to the Judean desert far from his native city of Damascus, leaving behind a comfortable life and a prestigious career like John Chrysostom, who 'renounced everything: the right to boast about a glorious and conspicuous fatherland [...]; distinguished birth and descent; gold, silver, precious stones, soft and illustrious garments, and in addition the glory of rhetoric and power.'<sup>47</sup> It is interesting how John of Damascus' Greek *vita* attempts to reconstruct the same background. With hagiographical flourishes, the *vita* describes how John of Damascus, confronted with the two gospel commandments, to distribute his wealth to the poor (Luc. 18, 22) or abandon his possessions for God (Mt 29, 29), decided to obey both, helping the poor, buying the freedom of captives and slaves and building churches for his family relatives. Then 'he went out to the desert,

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<sup>47</sup> Chrys. 7.10-4.

arriving at the monastery of the God-bearing Sabbas'.<sup>48</sup> The hagiographer's description of John's final arrangements in Damascus and his departure to the ἔρημος is indeed fascinating. The rhetorical *topoi* of the distribution of his possessions aside, the account transmits John's ambiance in the Judean desert, the solitary life in an unwelcoming environment as is emphasised in his own hagiographic narrations.

The prominence of desert spirituality in John's thought is woven into his encomia revealing his perception of the desert as a space for the shaping of the self. The force that leads one to enter into a dialogue between himself and the society, and renounce what the latter has to offer, originates in the love for something superior to society and the human self: God. John Chrysostom fled to the desert 'by a rush of divine eros'. In the hour of martyrdom Barbara faces stoically her tortures because of her eros for Christ.<sup>49</sup> Divine love orients the self with respect to its relationship with God. It also governs one's relationship with others. In a letter addressed to a certain archimandrite Iordanes regarding a dispute about the correct usage of the Trisagion hymn, John praises Iordanes' love for God which is transformed into love for his fellow-humans.<sup>50</sup>

John recognises the presence of divine eros in the saints and in others. In his *Homily on Holy Saturday* he states the importance of zeal and eros for the purification of one's soul,<sup>51</sup> and in the *Homily on the Fig Tree* he addresses the human nature itself in the semblance of the fig tree which Jesus cursed in the famous biblical passage, and exhorts it to confess aloud 'I am bound by your love.'<sup>52</sup> By stressing the vital necessity for love of God, John instructs his audience but most importantly betrays the importance of that love for him; it is the love that probably led him to the desert (as in his *vita*), but at the same great effort is required for

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<sup>48</sup> John of Jerusalem, *Vita S. Joannis Damasceni* PG 94.461.A-B.

<sup>49</sup> *Barb.* 12.27; 16.17; 22.27. Eros can also be directed to demonic beings, see Julian in *Artem.* 69.4-5.

<sup>50</sup> *Trisag.* 1.5.

<sup>51</sup> *Sabbat.* 1.11-2: Οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν ἄλλως ψυχῆς περιποιήσασθαι κάθαρσιν ἢ φόβῳ θεῷ καὶ ἔρωτι.

<sup>52</sup> *Ficus* 7.22: Δεσμία εἰμι τῷ σῶ ἔρωτι. See also *ibid.* 3.11-2: Ἡ συκὴ ὑπέγραφε τὴν φύσιν τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος.



it to be kept alive. When John treats the human nature as an animate figure with its own voice in the *Homily on the Fig Tree* and has it exclaim in the first person singular that it is a prisoner of its love for God, we hear in fact the preacher's own voice, reminding himself of the need to keep that love burning. The homilies and correspondence of John of Damascus are thus testimonies to the fact that he regards divine eros a necessary component of the self.

Perhaps the most profound insight into the monastic self is to be found in the long list of features that characterised John Chrysostom's physical and spiritual struggles and were analysed in chapter 3. Rather than keeping on with the hagiographical tradition with its emphasis on the historical events of John Chrysostom's life, the Damascene uses the encomium to examine the ascetic interiority, as reflected in the transformation of body and soul. The account is structured on numerous rhetorical questions, which emphasise the saint's spiritual achievements and invite the comparison of oneself with the saint owing to the way in which they are formulated: 'Τίς οὕτως ὀργήν καὶ θυμὸν ἠνιόχησεν, ὥς ἔννομον πραότητα κτήσασθαι ἀποστυγοῦσαν μὲν πᾶν, ὃ τι τῆς ἀρετῆς ἀντίθετον καὶ διεκδικοῦσαν ἐξ ἀδίκων τὸ δίκαιον; / Who harnessed wrath and anger so much as to acquire an upright gentleness, which abhors whatever is contrary to virtue and claims justice from things unjust?',<sup>53</sup> The saint's interior life becomes exposed in the form of a question which requires an answer. The questions originate in the preacher's admiration for the qualities of the saint's character. Yet however rhetorical, they prompt a spontaneous answer in the mind of everyone, including John's: no one can surpass the saint in the display of supreme virtue.

We saw in chapter 3 how the *Encomium of St John Chrysostom* is imbued with the values of the monastic life as a means of edifying the faithful according to the ideas and practices of those individuals who dedicated themselves to the pursuit of holiness. They were values to which John was also committed as a member of the Palestinian monastic community. Now

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<sup>53</sup> Chrys. 10.10-3.

the towering figure of St John Chrysostom served as a measure of the preacher's own advances or setbacks on his way up the spiritual ladder. The saint's teaching was life-changing, 'so that we may be cleansed more and more'.<sup>54</sup> There is no ambivalence in John's statement about who has need of Chrysostom's purifying example: it is the preacher as much as the audience. The saint's accomplishments have a controlling influence over John's conscience which is intensified by their monastically inspired nature. John, in fact, introduces a portrayal of the saint that invites him to outdo himself in spiritual and ascetic progress. The encomium thus becomes the basis for an interior evaluation, and like in other of John's works, it reveals aspects of a monastic self which come to the surface through interventions and the manipulation of the saints' narratives in a way that allows us to see how John stamps his homilies with his own views and preoccupations about himself.

John's understanding of the monastic experience, however, is not limited to the valuing of the power of introspection. The tranquillity of isolation in which self-reflection takes place eventually leads the monk to the contemplation of the divine. Saints are living proof of this: 'Who pursued praxis and theory,' asks John regarding St John Chrysostom, 'subjugating the pleasures of the flesh like fleshless and examining with God the things that are divine? / Τίς πρᾶξιν ἐπῆλθε καὶ θεωρίαν σαρκός τε ἡδονὰς πατήσας ὡς ἄσαρκος καὶ μετὰ Θεοῦ τὰ θεῖα σκεψάμενος';<sup>55</sup> The mortification of the passions through the practice of self-control elevates one above the material realm, at which point they achieve the comprehension, albeit imperfect, of things pertaining to God. Barbara was also 'led up to the creator through the unerring contemplation of beings', as John proclaims in a salutation to the martyr.<sup>56</sup> Contemplation came through frequent and sincere prayers, disclosing to her the properties of

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<sup>54</sup> *ibid.* 4.3-4: 'πλέον δὲ καὶ πλέον καθαρθεῖν'.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.* 5.7-9.

<sup>56</sup> *Barb.* 19.13.

the Holy Trinity which she manifested with her acts and confession, as mentioned in continuation:

Χαῖρε, ἡ ἐν τῷ τοῦ σωματικοῦ ρύπου καθατηρίῳ λουτρῷ συμβολικῶς τὴν τριάδα διὰ τῆς τῶν θυρίδων τριπλῆς φωταγωγίας ἐξεικονίσασα καὶ τὸ τῇ τριττῇ φωτοδοσίᾳ ψυχῶν μυστικὸν καὶ σωτήριον τυπικῶς διαγράψασα βάπτισμα. Χαῖρε, ἡ εὐθὺς τρανότατα τὴν τῆς ὁμοουσίου τριάδος πίστιν θεολογικῶς διομολογήσασα στόματι. Χαῖρε, ἡ τὸν ἕνα τῆς ἁγίας Τριάδος διὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν ἐνανθρωπήσαντα σωτηρίαν ἐν παρρησίᾳ κηρύξασα.<sup>57</sup>

Hail, you who symbolically depicted the Trinity by the triple light of the windows in the bathhouse that purifies the dirt of the body, and by way of signs represented the mystical and salvific baptism of the soul through the triple illumination. Hail, you who straightaway professed with the greatest clarity the faith to the consubstantial Trinity with your theological mouth (θεολογικῶ στόματι). Hail, you who proclaimed with freedom of speech the one of the Holy Trinity who became incarnate for our salvation.

Barbara's θεολογικόν στόμα enabled her to reveal the essence of Christian theology, whose knowledge she had acquired through reflection. The same markers of spiritual progress were discerned earlier in relation to John Chrysostom's definitions of orthodox dogma which usher forth from his deep intimacy with God. As discussed in chapter 3, John of Damascus carefully links John Chrysostom's ministry as a preacher and expositor of the Christian doctrine to his participation in the absolute wisdom of God after attaining the virtue of humility. The Damascene describes the culmination of the saints' spiritual ascent to God in terms of a mystical vision of the divine, which provides the necessary foundation for the discussion of theology.

But theological themes are omnipresent in John's homilies and other writings in a manner that his theological discourse invites an implicit comparison between the preacher and the saints' gift of contemplation. His treatises, in particular, express a deep concern for the maintenance of the purity of doctrine. Yet he often appears hesitant about his entitlement to intervene in matters of faith. In the *Against the Iconoclasts II*, he begins with words of apology: 'Grant forgiveness to one who asks, my masters, and receive a word of assurance

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<sup>57</sup> *ibid.* 19.15-21.

from me, the least and useless slave of the Church of God. For, as God is my witness, it is not on account of glory or ostentation that I am urged to speak but out of zeal for the truth.<sup>58</sup>

John expresses here the fear that his motives might be misinterpreted as worldly and devoid of spiritual content. In the prologue to his most famous work, the *Fountain Head of Knowledge*, he demonstrates his awareness of one's need to master their imperfections and purify the mind for it to accept the action of the divine truths, although he considers himself not to be in such a state of readiness in order to undertake the task of writing this work:

[...] then how am I, who am defiled and stained with every sort of sin, and bear within myself the tumultuous seas of my conjectures, and have purified neither my mind nor my understanding that they may serve as a mirror of God and his divine reflections; how am I, who have not sufficient power of speech to express such concepts, to utter those divine and ineffable things which surpass the comprehension of every rational creature?<sup>59</sup>

The theme of unworthiness, based on the idea that the author is not pure enough to reflect upon God and theologise, had deep roots in the patristic tradition, strongly expressed in Gregory of Nazianzus' *First Theological Oration* in which he explains that talking about God is 'permitted only to those who have been examined and have a solid footing in contemplation, and have previously been purified in soul and body, or at the very least are being purified.'<sup>60</sup> For John, the concept of purity and contemplation is also a concern. He constructs a self-devaluating discourse which is centred on his lack of spiritual preparation to comprehend the mysteries of theology. Even so, in embarking upon the composition of his *The Fountain Head of Knowledge*, he expresses the hope that his mouth 'will be filled with the Spirit'.<sup>61</sup> The imperativeness of protecting the church's unity and integrity also sanctions his involvement in the religious debates, curbing sentiments of unworthiness and calling for a defending voice. John submits himself to the biblical prescriptions, 'if you shrink back, my

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<sup>58</sup> *Imag.* II.1.1-7 (trans. Louth 2003: 59).

<sup>59</sup> *Dial.* Proem. 21-6. (trans. adapted from Chase 1958: 4).

<sup>60</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 27.3.4-6.

<sup>61</sup> *Dial.* Proem. 40.

soul has no pleasure in you’, and ‘if you see the sword coming and do not warn your brother, his blood I shall require at your hand.’<sup>62</sup> Necessity and the expectation of the guiding inspiration of the Holy Spirit are the reasons behind his theological endeavours, even if he considers himself to be far from the required contemplative state.

The emphasis in the hagiographic homilies on the saints’ ascent to contemplation of God as a prerequisite for theology has a similar double effect. On the one hand, although it is the saints who theologise, their teaching is transmitted by the preacher. John is identified with the saints in that his exposition of their beliefs and arguments mirrors their understanding of God. By communicating their theological teaching to the faithful, John accepts the role of the continuator of their work for the benefit of his congregations. On the other hand, by increasing the distance between himself and the saints whose purified life led them to the ultimate goal of theory and illumination, the preacher exposes his weakness and humility as a theologian. The lives of the holy persons are used as mechanisms of self-review by which John makes himself conscious of the experiential character of theology. Through the hagiographic narratives, the self becomes accustomed to the introspective and contemplative processes required for the knowledge of the divine mysteries, until it is elevated to the highest spiritual level represented by the contemplative model self of the saints.

John of Damascus’ view of himself as a monk and theologian entails an uncertainty as to how truly capable he is of achieving the status of perfection that these two identities of his self imply. By contrast, there is a defining aspect of his personality which emerges confidently, his competence as a speaker and writer: ‘[...] I set before you, as discerning assayers, the talent (τάλαντον) of eloquence that He gave me, so that when my Lord comes, he may find that it has multiplied and borne fruit in the form of souls, and finding me a

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<sup>62</sup> *Imag.* I.1.20-3.

faithful slave he may cause me to enter into his sweetest joy, for which I have longed.’<sup>63</sup> In accordance with the *topos* of humility, John always downplays the importance of his sermons calling them ψελλίσματα.<sup>64</sup> But his λόγος is a divine gift that needs to be cultivated. His sermons perhaps cannot match the grandeur of his subjects,<sup>65</sup> but he always feels the urge to continue.<sup>66</sup>

John oscillates between consenting to the inexpressible profundity of saintly experiences and using his gift to fulfil, albeit imperfectly, his ‘debt’ of preaching.<sup>67</sup> However, he faced no dilemma in terms of his rhetorical skill. That as a preacher he could not transmit the essence of the saints’ deeds was a truth that knew no exceptions. When John expresses, therefore, doubts about his rhetorical talent, it is only in relation to its capacity to fully reflect the greatness of the saints; he does not pretend to question his art of speaking. His high-quality sermons are a proof of this.<sup>68</sup> In the end, John always uses his τάλαντον, which is the unquestionable gift he possesses.

As we have seen, his spiritual authority as a preacher who cares about his flock and is invited by his superiors to employ his talent for their benefit is one of the reasons for the debate over the use of his rhetoric at the beginning of many of his works. However, the homilies reveal a further aspect of John’s self-perception as a preacher, the same that can be detected in the construction of his identity as a theologian. His hagiographic narratives are bold assertions of the role of rhetoric in overcoming the challenges facing Christians. If the saints made manifest God’s mystery through words and came to the aid of the faithful with their encouraging message, he was expected to follow their example and display the same passion for preaching. John took saints as models and saw in them a justification for the use

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<sup>63</sup> *Imag.* II.1.18-23 (trans. Louth 2003: 59).

<sup>64</sup> *Ficus* 1.7; *Chrys.* 1.9.

<sup>65</sup> *Chrys.* 1.4; *Barb.* 1.1-4.

<sup>66</sup> *Chrys.* 1.15; *Artem.* 2.2

<sup>67</sup> *Dorm.* I.2.22: ‘χρῆος’.

<sup>68</sup> Highly rhetorical speech is a sign of individuality and confidence. Cf. Papaioannou 2014: 27.

of the authority that came from his natural rhetorical talent. The reconstruction of Eugenius and Macarius' speech to Julian in the *Passion of St Artemius* perfectly captures the notion of skilled and vehement preaching. The martyrs undertake to refute pagan positions regarding Christ through an unusual presentation of pagan literature that impresses even their persecutor. But John plays a very active role in the recreation of the scene. Written *ex novo*, the martyrs' speech becomes a reflection of John in a display of knowledge of pagan belief, commanding eloquence and argumentative superiority. It is his defence of Christianity, but one that would appear suitable to convey the tenor of the martyrs' *apologia*. His hagiographic accounts are transformed into a means of reaffirming the need for his preaching whether on issues of faith or to edify and alleviate the people, in the manner of St John Chrysostom's preaching to his flock on virtue and the problems of everyday life. But they are also expressions of personal evaluation of his ministry and spiritual aspiration. The emphasis on St John's God-given gift of rhetoric as a reward for his purification (see ch. 3) is once again driven by interior motivations. The connection between preaching and purity manifests the homilist's awareness of his standing in relation to the saint. The admiration for the saint's achievements is thus the external confirmation of a humble interior disposition to equip his ministry with Chrysostom's exemplary virtue.

John's hagiographic homilies, then, are organically built around his intention to offer an intricately articulated portrait of the saints that will act as a guiding beacon in the lives of the faithful. However, this aspect forms only part of their interpretive wealth. Equally illuminating are the bonds of interdependence forged between the preacher and the subjects of the homilies: John of Damascus represents the saints in ways that reflect his own self-understanding. In this vein, I chose to conceive of the homily as a form of discourse which does not simply reveal the preacher's views, but also his view of himself, becoming, thus, a rich source of knowledge about his interior life, and compensating for the notable scarcity of

historical/autobiographical information about him. Within Christian theology the tradition of the self and the wider discourse of its relation to God had a fundamental place. But the consciousness of the self also becomes manifest in literary writing through a writer's self-references and narrative strategies. In John's hagiographic homilies the preacher's self is expressed and defined in relation to the saints. His first-person statements about his weakness to produce encomia worthy of the subject-matter are not simply stereotypical expressions of humility, since he is elsewhere assertive about his role and abilities as a preacher, but a recognition of the grandeur of the saints in whose accounts he is often emotionally involved. The invocation of the saints as healers owing to their exemplary life of perfection establishes them as models of imitation which John strives to emulate, revealing a sincere sense of imperfection in view of their spiritual status as 'friends' of God. Their exemplarity exercises a deep influence on the way John constructs the narratives of their lives. In the accounts he creates, several aspects of his life are presented with great emphasis as part of their own experience. The saints' ascetic lifestyle, their struggles for the faith, and their eloquent teaching reflect John's personality as monk, theologian, and preacher. The self is thus made manifest through the different modes of representation of the saints. However, John results inferior to them in every respect. The hagiographic narratives do not only make accessible the preacher's self to us; John himself used them as instruments of self-reflection and self-improvement.



## | Conclusion

This thesis was conceived, first, as an attempt to illuminate aspects of St John of Damascus' work that had previously been overlooked, and second, as an illustration of the alternative ways in which his homiletic writings can be approached. Regarding the first aim, it was noted that, although John of Damascus was remembered as a talented preacher, his homilies have received little scholarly attention, exposing a gap both in our understanding of John as an influential monk and priest in eighth-century Palestine and our appreciation of an essential part of his literary production. This thesis, therefore, set out to recover John of Damascus the preacher and shed light to his homilies – in particular, to his three hagiographic sermons, the *Encomium of St Barbara*, the *Encomium of St John Chrysostom*, and the *Passion of St Artemius*, whose unifying feature of the praise of the saints provides a convenient methodological basis for exploring the wealth of patterns and themes that arise from them.

In order to gain insight into such underlying patterns and themes, it was, furthermore, considered necessary to follow closely the development of John's narrative and thought as reflected in the homilies. The second objective of this thesis was, therefore, to suggest the close reading of the homilies as an indispensable interpretative tool with which to explore their context, their inner structure, their meaning for the audience, and their value for the access they grant us to the preacher's figure. This approach was considered particularly suitable for the study of John's homiletic works, especially as a means of counterbalancing the lack of explicit evidence in the texts concerning various aspects of the preaching act and its aims. Indeed, close reading proved that the cryptic nature of the homilies should not prevent us from an examination of their several dimensions. Meaning was embedded in the texts in many different ways, and rather than focus on the apparent and visible features of

homilies, attention should also be paid to the alternative methods by which they acquired significance for contemporary audiences but also for us modern readers.

The corpus of John's hagiographic homilies provided an excellent opportunity for a detailed study of the Damascene's preaching art and a close analysis of the original texts. By forming the essence of the preacher's panegyrics, the figures of the celebrated saints resulted into a key element in the process of decoding the homilies, since they constitute the virtual axis around which homiletic discourse was structured. They have, consequently, also supplied the main framework for the organisation of the content of this thesis and served as guiding points in the search for sources of information and meaning in the homilies.

The discussion about the context of John's hagiographic preaching marks the first example of how the central thematic subject of the homilies was used as a basis for their analysis, and, in particular, for a closer inspection of the location and occasion of preaching. In the absence of explicit references as to where the sermons were delivered, and in order to limit the range of possible locations, the existence of churches and shrines connected with the names of Sts Barbara, John Chrysostom, and Artemius was investigated. In combination with some hints found in the homilies, the evidence suggests Jerusalem as a likely location for the delivery of the *Encomium of St John Chrysostom*, and perhaps an urban setting for the *Encomium of St Barbara*. Similarly, an attempt was made to assess the possible occasions for the delivery of John's hagiographic homilies based on our current (limited) knowledge of the liturgical landscape in the eighth century. It was observed that preaching during the Divine Liturgy on saints' feast days is not *a priori* implausible, although other services cannot be excluded, especially in the case of the *Passion of St Artemius*. It was also noted that both location and occasion are particularly difficult to determine as a result of changes in the character of the broader liturgical context in which the memory of the saints was celebrated, namely, the *panegyris*. The firm establishment of the cult of the saints over the centuries

meant that space and ritual gradually became standardised and were not, therefore, directly reflected in the content of John's homilies.

But if the absence of certain information from the homilies concerning the circumstances of preaching during the saints' festivals can still tell us something about the nature of John's sermons, then the notable presence of a striking feature in their structure can be all the more illuminating. This is none other than the hagiographic narratives themselves, and how the figures of the saints – this time through the different modes of recounting their lives and ordeals – had a powerful effect on the form of the homilist's message. The second chapter aimed at emphasising the importance John assigned to older hagiographic texts and other source material, which he incorporated into his panegyrics, transforming them into the basis of his narrations (*Encomium of St Barbara*; *Passion of St Artemius*) or, at least, into significant components of them (*Encomium of St John Chrysostom*). It was underlined that the reuse of primary sources served primarily edifying purposes, and was suggested that John's practice of re-editing older texts may be seen as representing an early stage of the phenomenon of *metaphrasis* during which practicality was prioritised over literary stylisation, in contrast to what is observed in subsequent centuries. How the preacher employed the borrowed material, as well as the conventions and *topoi* that accompanied it, is indicative of the new meaning he wanted to convey, and should heighten our awareness of what this level of complexity signifies for the better appreciation of the homilies.

An answer to that question was attempted in the next two chapters, which were designed with the intention of suggesting to the reader possible ways of detecting the preacher's ideas and aims within the intricate framework of his homilies. Once again, the protagonists of the homilies, namely, the saints, were central to our enquiry, since, apart from the preaching context and the structure of the sermons, the commemoration of their lives also dictated the direction of John's pastoral message. The *Encomium of St Barbara* revealed to us John's

ability to dwell on prominent themes of the hagiographic narratives, such as family, and create from them a discourse that promoted his audience's spiritual advancement according to the ideals embodied by the saints as exemplars of Christian virtue. At other times, the homilist, by offering a different mixture of personal creativity and reliance on the hagiographic tradition, produced accounts that were deliberately associated with specific themes, as is the case with the *Encomium of St John Chrysostom*, in which the imitation of monastic ideals is encouraged as a call to perfection. One of the more significant contributions of our analysis at this point was to reflect on the reasons that led the preacher to shift the focus of his homilies to particular themes. Specifically, we considered the circulation of values and the existence of powerful spiritual links between monks and monastic preachers, and laypeople, in an attempt to illustrate that John's portrayal of the saints often reflected the broader social fabric of Chalcedonian communities in the Middle East. The result is a nuanced understanding of John's preaching and its dialogue with external factors in the process of strengthening the religious experience of individual Christians, but also safeguarding the religious identity of his congregations. Accounts of the saints' defiance against oppressive authorities, transformed by the preacher into symbols of the ever-present threats menacing the orthodox faith, allowed John the opportunity to warn his audience against contemporary abuse of political power and heresy. John's polemical treatises proved particularly valuable for purposes of comparison, revealing that his homiletic discourse had deep roots in his theology and worldview, and highlighting the need to approach John's homilies in conjunction with the rest of his written production.

Homilies, then, can be appreciated for the insight they offer into John's teaching and the needs of his audience. The final chapter, however, also emphasises the quality of sermons to accommodate diverse forms of self-expression. Although homilies barely betray personal information about John, such a subjective act as preaching should not be expected to entail

only obvious manifestations of the homilist's person. On the contrary, valuable fragments of John's self – his thoughts, feelings, and self-perceptions – were assembled to draw a portrait of him that may not have revealed new biographical details, yet provided us with a fresh look into something of no less importance, the inner man. How John related himself to the holy men and women he was praising is telling of his own impressions and experiences, and of their unmistakable influence on the content of preaching.

The most important implication of this thesis is reflected by its very structure and development: homilies can be examined from a number of perspectives corresponding to the different aspects of these multifarious works. Each of the previous chapters aimed at proposing possible lines of enquiry within a coherent account of the enormous potential of John of Damascus' hagiographic homilies. They may well be seen, however, as points of departure for further investigation with regard to John's entire homiletic work or the homiletic production of the middle Byzantine period in general.

One way to pursue the results of this study further is to clarify some issues concerning the literary nature of homilies in this period. The peculiar relationship between homiletics and hagiography, as testified by John's reuse of older hagiographic texts, could lead to a better assessment of the origins of the practice of upgrading low-style hagiographic accounts, and to a reconsideration of the contribution of preaching to its emergence. It is worth asking the question, in this respect, of whether it was elaborate homilies, such as John's, that promoted the trend of a more extensive and systematic reworking of hagiographic texts. Another interesting approach would be to explore the possibilities of the methodology adopted in this thesis and concerned the close reading of homilies, by applying it to the work of preachers that were active in the wider region of the eastern Mediterranean in the first two centuries of Arab rule (seventh-eighth centuries), such as Sophronius of Jerusalem, Anastasius of Sinai, (Ps.-)Leonitus of Neapolis, Andrew of Crete, and, of course, John of Damascus. The close

reading of these sources could allow a fuller assessment of their correspondence to contemporary reality, and help analyse the role of preaching as a form of public discourse in the new social and religious context. How preachers dealt publicly with the needs and anxieties of the Christian congregations living under a new reality in the greater Middle East, covering aspects such as ethics, social behaviour, and religious belief and practice; how Muslims and heterodox Christians were represented in Christian public discourse; how freedom of speech and public religious practices intimately related to preaching, such as processions and visits to local holy sites, were affected by the new circumstances, and influenced the style, content, and impact of homiletic discourse – all these are issues that could be the subject of a comprehensive study. Other questions, such as the search for an ‘auto-biographical’ dimension in homilies, based on a deeper look into the preacher’s self, are also in need of further analysis. These are, of course, only a few examples of promising avenues of further research. Yet, as John of Damascus’ homilies have demonstrated, even the most neglected writings of a preacher that ‘flows with gold’ can provide unlimited possibilities and inspiration for the modern scholar.

## PART II

## | *Encomium of St Barbara*

(1) The glory and grace and fame of the saints and of the piety of the triumphant martyrs are admittedly superior to every encomiastic composition and lie above every literary creation  
5 swollen with the croaking of rhetorical speeches and of the sophistic art. And even those that are greatly skilled in these areas of knowledge and have devoted and spent their whole life in such studies and pursuits, would be struck, I think, with amazement and be at a loss with the greatness of this account, and even more so those among us who are unlearned and inexperienced and, as the proverb says, have not even tasted with their fingertip such training  
10 and skill and rhetorical thinking. But regarding the delivery of this speech, this should by no means be a reason for leaving ourselves and the present keen audience completely deprived of the benefit that naturally comes from such an ordeal, as if we were somehow confused and constrained by cowardice and held back by sluggishness.

Let us, therefore, call in the grace from above that comes from Christ, the supervisor and  
15 judge of such contests, for mercy and help, and narrate and bring to light, as far as possible, the victorious martyr Barbara, whom we are now fittingly praising and whose feast is celebrated today by the whole people, and briefly present the account of her whole martyrdom, so that we apprehend the invisible divine power that assists and invigorates the martyrs, and provide our soul with no common benefit and improvement, not by trying to  
20 praise the contests of the martyr with the sounds and words of eloquence – for martyrs do not need the help of discourses – but by narrating things in plain language.

(2) Now, then, join me, o Christ- and martyr-loving congregation, retract and withdraw your mind from outside distractions, and listen attentively to my speech. For it is absurd that people hurry out eagerly to worldly spectacles, I mean horse races and wrestling matches and



other such gymnastic competitions, and passionately want to watch the struggle for victory  
5 and the engagement of rivals, without leaving before the end even if they have countless  
concerns and before they see who wins the victory and lifts the prize and puts on the wreath,  
even if they receive no benefit for themselves from there.

Here, however, here a soul-profiting and spiritual spectacle lies before us, which involves  
as a judge not one of the kings of this world, but the king of all, Christ our God, who rules  
10 over all things visible and invisible, and as spectators the thousands and tens of thousands of  
heavenly hosts and forces, and as a contestant, Barbara, Christ's celebrated and beloved  
wreath-bearing martyr; and as a rival, not someone common or of second rank, but the first  
one, as the apostle says: 'For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the  
rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual  
15 forces of evil in the heavenly realms', namely, against heavenly spirits; and with them, her  
own father by blood, and the secular rulers and governors, whom Christ's all-pure lamb  
Barbara had as adversaries, a host of visible and invisible enemies.

(3) In sight of such a contest as presented before us, will we not hasten to watch these  
things, and besprinkle with praise the encounter and engagement and grips of the two sides,  
and behold the victory of our winner and crown-bearer, and the hateful daemons being  
defeated, put to shame, and thrown down, and the crowds of the angels exclaiming with loud  
5 noises, praising and rewarding the triumphant martyr with the applause of victory; and how  
Christ himself rises as a judge from his kingly throne and offers her the crown of victory, as  
with the first-martyr Stephen, and welcomes the victor and embraces her, as she approaches  
covered in sweat and guarded by the angels, and puts her to rest in his heavenly bridal  
chambers? Is there a more delightful, more pleasant, and more profitable sight for those who  
10 love spectacles than this? For 'deem blessed', says Basil, the holy doctor of the church, 'those  
who were truly martyred, in order that you may be a martyr in disposition and step forth

without blood, floggings, and torture'. Is there indeed any spectacle or occupation more profitable than this, or one that leads sooner to salvation and offers greater riches? I think not.

But what is happening to me, beloved ones? Before I touch the beginnings of her struggles, the speech has hurried me to the end. Come, then, let us call it back and approach already the foregates of her martyrdom and begin with God's help the account in parts.

(4) When the all-good and compassionate Word of God saw that his own creature, which he had created from the beginning according to his own image, and to which he had entrusted authority over the things on earth, was expelled from the bliss of paradise by the deceit of the imperceptible serpent through the visible serpent, and was thenceforth enslaved and submitted with his whole race not only to decay but also to manifold errors and dishonourable passions, and that such was the darkness of impiety covering the eyes of his soul that he had abandoned the one true God and offered veneration to wood and stone and lifeless matter, and had been banished and thrown down into the deepest part of Hades and impiety by the evil and apostate daemon, he did not tolerate the hubris of the wicked tyrant and the hopeless loss of the deceived man. But rather the good shepherd put on with mercy the fleece of his own creature from an unwedded virgin, and luring the adversary with it, conquered him by the cross and justly ousted his tyranny, since he had unjustly launched death against him who had not experienced sin, although it was sin that death was destined for; for he who had in no way tasted sin did not surrender to the chastisement and punishment of death.

(5) And so he who killed Christ unjustly would righteously be suppressed in return and be deprived of the wealth he had gathered. His death is the ousting and reduction of his power, since the race of the daemons was made immortal by the creator. And the Lord said at the time of his passion: 'the prince of this world is coming and in me he will find nothing', that is, he will not find the fruit of his seeds or any trace or smell or suspicion of sin. Because,

according to the prophet, 'he committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.' Therefore, once again he said: 'now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out', that is, he will be deprived of his tyrannical power and be banished.

10 By his resurrection, then, God restored and renewed our lump, and sent the holy apostles to the ends of the world to deliver his saving message to the mortals and return them to their creator, and to disperse the darkness of godlessness by the brightness of the Spirit, eliminating error and teaching the knowledge of God. Thence, like flames that lay hold of a dense pile of wood and rise rapidly to a blazing fire, which gradually spreads to nearby things  
15 and whose glow and energy cannot be pushed into a corner, but are visible to everyone and even to those who live far away, so did the divine fire, which the Lord from above the earth came down to send to the earth, and which consumes and destroys every sin, every evil and vile habit and disposition, and spreads through the apostles and their successors to the human souls. And those souls that were smooth and soft and fit for reshaping, and expected and  
20 longed for their creator and for him who would redeem them from the prolonged captivity, were immediately cleansed and purified of the stain of sin, and were polished bright and shiny and godlike. But those that had deeply and willingly accepted the condition of impiety and like bats refused to receive the light of the shining sun, choosing to live in darkness and wallowing eternally in mud, were dismissed to the fire of Gehenna, since they desired of their  
25 own will to be incurably ill.

(6) But not such was the most holy and pure soul of the honourable martyr Barbara, who instead received the radiance of faith. And when she compared light with darkness and saw its incomparable superiority, and came to recognise through divine knowledge the deceit and gloom of the despicable, she seized at once the heavenly seed like a rich and fertile field, and  
5 meticulously cultivated it by practicing God's commandments, bearing thirty and sixty and a

hundred times more fruit, putting into her heart ascending steps and rising to perfection in virtue.

Thus the word of the prophet was truly fulfilled: ‘And the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the water covers the seas’ – the grace of the prophet calling here  
10 ‘seas’ the crowds of nations. But the good-hating and evil-loving daemon could not tolerate that the multitudes of the redeemed advanced in virtue day by day. For he who once envied Adam and his wife for their life in paradise, was now waiting in idleness, watching how countless numbers of people entered through their faith in Christ not into a visible and earthly paradise, but into heaven, from where he fell down like an iron sphere.

15 The Tempter, then, sought for a trial. For he could not bear not to have any authority over anyone else, but just as when he heard God once boasting in his servant and saying, ‘Have you ever considered my servant Job, for there is no one like him on earth, a man blameless, just, true, and God-fearing, who stays away from every evil?’ struck with envy, he immediately replied, ‘It cannot be that Job should rever God for nothing,’ and continued, ‘so  
20 send me to inflict pain upon his flesh, and he will surely curse you to your face.’ And God, wishing to prove his own servant firm and invulnerable even in the greatest peril, in order that it might not seem that he chose to boast in him by chance, granted him his request – so now, too, the most evil one, hearing the Lord exclaim in praise of his Church ‘And the gates of Hades will not overcome it’ – naming ‘gates of Hades’ all kinds of punishments that may  
25 force and lead one down to death and Hades – once again sought shamelessly for a trial; and, indeed, receiving authority and selecting, therefore, his agents, people who were full of impiety and equalled him in brutality, he appointed them rulers and governors, and issued by them a universal edict forbidding the veneration of Christ and ordering that sacrifices should be offered to the idols and that dissenters should be killed unsparingly by all kinds of tortures.  
30 From that time on, people of every age and class, men and women, were reaped like grass

without compassion, because they chose to preserve their faith in Christ unharmed and intact until death.

(7) At the time, then, when the impious Maximian was reigning and Marcianus was a governor, there was, it is said, a very wealthy local ruler named Dioscorus, who was obsessed with the veneration of the lifeless idols. He had an only-daughter, Barbara, who excelled in physical beauty and was conspicuous for the dignity of her character. He constructed, 5 therefore, a high tower and shut the virgin in, so that no man could see the blooming and dazzling brightness and splendour of her beauty. So she lived there, in silence, freed from external noises, and contemplated and cultivated and nurtured god-fearing thoughts, because she knew that solitude was the mother of fine and lofty concepts.

She despised the deceit and veneration of the idols, for they lead one down into the nets of 10 Hades, but cherished and welcomed the true Christian faith and the confession of the holy and consubstantial Trinity, for it raises one to heaven; and she pictured and turned in her mind the teachings about the immortality of the soul, the kingdom of heaven, and the pleasure of noble goods, as well as those about Gehenna, the eternal punishment, and also the unstable and uncertain twists of the ephemeral things of this world. She imagined all the time 15 the lamp-bearing maidens joining Christ, the incorruptible Bridegroom, in his heavenly chamber and taking delight in the ineffable bliss. And she longed and desired and prayed to become worthy of that most blessed fate and felicity and inexpressible honour.

(8) Amid such contemplations as frequented and prepared the soul of the prudent and pure maiden, her father appeared. Having been advised by many distinguished men who valued the conjugal bonds and marriage union with her, he urged her to give her consent. But she spurned those words as foolish and offensive, and glanced furiously at her father and 5 completely shook off his soul-harming counsel, demanding that he should make no mention of this again. For, having devoted herself to the heavenly and immortal Bridegroom, the

virgin thought it was ludicrous and completely absurd to yield to those who like worms in marshy swamps covered themselves in heathen mud.

At that time her father was jealously building a bath-house, and after he instructed the  
10 workmen to build two windows facing the south that would let the light in, he went on a journey to another country. But Barbara, the Trinity's servant and maiden, inspected the building works and forced the workmen to add three windows to the building. And as she was returning and ascending back to her tower, the fair girl saw the lifeless and senseless idols to which her father paid respect, and filled with the Spirit of God and inspired with  
15 fervent zeal, spat in their insolent faces, saying timely the verses of David: 'Let them that make you be like to you: and every one that trusts in you.'

O truly blessed and God-loving soul! O maiden adorned with an ardent faith! O girl that spurned your father's imprudence and insanity with divine prudence! O daughter that recalled the naivety and deceit of the foremother Eve with firm spirit. The latter was immediately  
20 overcome after receiving a light charge from the enemy, but Barbara not only sternly repelled his lures but also spat in his face through the idols; for she extended and sent through and hurled the insult to the master of evil, who acts and deceives through them as his instruments.

(9) When her father returned from his journey, he rebuked the builders for changing his plans and was outraged at the addition of the third window, and the builders exclaimed that the cause was his daughter's order. When he found out from her the excuse for the third window, the honourable maiden seized the timely opportunity to declare openly with holy  
5 wisdom the majesty of the Trinity and urge the unbeliever to find the saving faith. Yes, she said, for the Trinity 'gives light to everyone coming into the world,' that is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. For the visible light is a creation and an obscure and vague shadow of the imperceptible and venerable light of the three conjoined suns of the Trinity.

But the soul of the defender of darkness, who was nurtured in impiety, was struck at  
10 Barbara's bold and undisguised confession as if by lightning sent by the thrice-bright God,  
and he became blinder by the extraordinary brightness. Teeming with anger, he drew his  
sword and rushed furiously on his only-born daughter to cut her down, crossing the limits of  
piety and nature together, because she showed him the way of life.

Indeed, not only does a thorny plant give beautiful and fragrant roses, but also many a  
15 time a root of profanity produces fruits of piety. And the patriarch Abraham is witness, and it  
was for this reason that he was called the father of all the nations that showed a zeal for his  
faith, for he first abandoned polytheism and godlessness. In that case, too, the divine  
prophecy of our Saviour Jesus Christ was truly fulfilled, when he said that he would turn a  
daughter and a daughter-in-law against her father and her mother and her mother-in-law, the  
20 young against the old and foolish, and that he would separate the evil from the good.

(10) What did, then, the illustrious Barbara do? Seeing her father's abominable charge and  
feeling pity for his murderous act, she prayed and split open a nearby rock and sprang out on  
the other side of the mountain. What a wonder! The rock was parted and received the lamb in  
its bosom, but her father and persecutor, more insensitive than stone, was petrified through  
5 the blindness of his heart and was transformed into a stone replica himself. And not even the  
extraordinary miracle was able to appease his hard and inhuman soul, but he climbed up the  
mountain and looked for her by asking questions. And indeed, he found her and whipped her,  
and dragging her by the hair, they immediately came back from the mountain, and he locked  
the blessed one in a small house. He then revealed everything to the governor and handed her  
10 to him to be tortured, and made him swear by the gods that he would punish her with bitter  
torments.

When the governor took his seat at the tribunal, he ordered the martyr to be brought  
forward. But when he saw the blooming beauty of her face, he admired, and amazed by her

fair countenance, started to flatter her in an attempt to persuade her and win her over with  
15 compliments. For this is the first temptation posed by the devil; he either tries to entice and  
soften man with pleasure and praise, or terrify him with threats and punishments. When the  
governor emptied his quiver and saw that the martyr rejected the charms of this world and  
every earthly luxury and honour as withering and perishable grass, and that she avoided with  
contempt his exhortations and spells like the venom of a snake, he turned to another kind of  
20 temptations. But when he saw that she spurned his threats too, filled with anger for failing his  
aim, he said to her: What do you want, then, young girl, to sacrifice to the gods or to be  
consumed by bitter punishments? To which the martyr, with firm character and freedom of  
speech, replied by confessing passionately her faith and mocking the mindlessness and  
impiety of the godless tyrants.

25 What did she say? 'I am ready to offer the sacrifice to my Lord Jesus Christ, who has  
made the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and all that is in them. As for your gods, the  
prophet did well to rail at them: 'They have mouths and speak not: they have eyes and see  
not. They have ears and hear not: they have noses and smell not. They have hands and feel  
not: they have feet and walk not: neither shall they cry out through their throat. Let them that  
30 make them become like unto them: and all such as trust in them.' For just as you falsely  
apply to them the holy name of 'god', so is also the human form applied to them, one which  
is deprived and bereaved of any life-giving force.

(11) The abominable and insolent governor was shocked at these words, and with boiling  
anger ordered to strip the martyr and rub her flesh unsparingly with the whip and wipe the  
wounds that were inflicted upon her with hairy rags and garments, until her whole body was  
dipped in blood. Heavens, what a venerable and sacred confession, O Christ's triumphant  
5 martyr Barbara, which you fearlessly and unhesitatingly made to everyone and proclaimed  
with divine wisdom, so that the people and angels who were beholding your martyrdom, and



the daemons who were invisibly opposing you together with your visible enemies, would hear it; a confession, which the Lord wrote down in heaven and acknowledged to his Father, the source of light and Godhead, and will once again in public acknowledge and declare.

10 Heavens, what brave patience and endurance, by which you struck down the Devil and his apostate daemons, and caused the divine angels wonder and praise, and destroyed the fallacy of the idols like a spider web, and strengthened and established the true faith.

(12) When the judge saw the steadfastness and endurance of the saint, he ordered her to be taken to prison for some time, until he considered what more bitter torments he could inflict on her. Then, in the middle of the night, an exceedingly bright light shone around her, in which the Lord of glory revealed himself, relieving her pain and sorrow with his appearance,  
5 and encouraging her with exhortations for the coming trial, saying ‘Be strong, Barbara, for there is great joy in heaven and earth for your struggles. And do not be scared or afraid of the threats of the tyrant. For I am with you and will deliver you from the wounds that have been inflicted on you.’ And the wounds immediately disappeared from her body. And having said this, the Lord of heavens ascended again to heaven. The true martyr and servant of Christ was  
10 fully healed and was filled with cheer and joy and contentment at Christ’s encouragement. And you reasonably rejoiced, most blessed maiden, for the occasion of your joyfulness is the only true happiness and unfading and irremovable delight.

O truly blessed eyes, which were worthy to see the Lord of glory, whom not even the Cherubs in heaven and the many-eyed orders dare to behold. O blessed ears, which received  
15 the sound of God’s words. O admirable and thrice-blessed soul, which the God of all comforted, and the Lord of heaven and earth and the underworld consoled with exhortations coming from his own mouth. You, the bride of Christ, while still in flesh, accepted the pledge of the kingdom of heaven as a manifestation of your whole dowry. Therefore, you deemed and judged the temptation of the painful punishments as arrows darted by children or as the

20 bite of fleas, and attracted by the love for him who revealed himself, and with a firm soul, you said: ‘Who shall separate me from the love of Christ? Sorrow, or distress, or famine, or persecution, or whip, or peril? For I am convinced that neither life nor death nor some angel, and neither the present nor the future nor any other creation, will be able to separate me from the love of Christ.’

(13) The next morning the martyr was brought to the tribunal at the governor’s command. And as soon as he saw that her bruises had disappeared and that her body was whole and intact without the slightest graze, the insane and mind-posessed said ‘Look how the gods care and love you, that they even healed your wounds’. The martyr laughed at his madness  
5 and insanity and replied ‘Your gods are like you: dumb and blind and senseless and motionless, unable to help themselves. So how could they heal me, who am obliterating their folly that deceives people? But he who has cured me is Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, whom you are unworthy of seeing with your sacrilegious eyes and your insensible heart’. At these words, the abominable blazed up with anger like a beast, and commanded  
10 that they tear her sides with vigour, and burn her wounds with fire torches, and strike her head with a hammer as if on an anvil. And Barbara, lifting up her eyes to heaven, said ‘You, Lord, who see into the hearts of men, know that I have come to you from my love for you; do not forsake me until the end’.

And so the brave martyr of Christ bravely endured this punishment too, and surpassed not  
15 only the limits of female weakness and the lack of manhood, but also human nature. For how could she endure so many torments and bitter and painful punishments, if not by surpassing the humbleness of her body with the power of the Spirit which invisibly invigorated and strengthened her?

(14) But even after all this had occurred, the Devil’s servant and advocate did not have his rage satiated, but turned his mind, which gashes forth evil, to yet another kind of torture, for

in him resided the lord and begetter of all evil, the eloquent serpent, the eternal manslayer and manhater. The governor commanded, it is said, that they cut off the martyr's breasts by sword. As soon as they were cut off, the lamb of Christ looked up to heaven and said: 'Do not  
5 reject me from your face, and do not recall your holy spirit from me.'

And so the martyr accepted this torture too, with patience and gratitude. I wonder, most evil daemon, have you got some other wicked plan, more grievous than this, stored in the depths of your soul? Have you conceived of, or already have at hand, some kind of torture  
10 more painful for a woman's nature? Your mind is not tired of devising punishments against the martyr. Add more, if you will. For you will find a diamond, or rather an unbroken soul, harder than diamond, an anvil which will push back your strikes. 'It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' The more you increase the punishments, the more you increase, without your intention, the crowns of victory for the martyr and triumphant young maiden, and make  
15 her rewards brighter against your will. And to yourself you cause greater humiliation, when you are defeated, and fall, and are thrown backwards in every combat and engagement, and heap upon your cursed head more eternal punishments and burning ashes.

(15) But also I cannot help but marvel at the inhuman and animal-like behaviour and unfatherly disposition of him who is the parent of the blessed one by blood, yet is a stranger to her pious sentiments in spirit. You truly surpassed, merciless father, the irrational beasts themselves in atrociousness and cruelty. For when they see their offspring being hurt, they  
5 defend them until death. But you, even when you saw the milk-bearing breasts of your own only-born daughter being pitilessly cut off with swords as if in a meat-market, were neither ashamed of the insult to her nature nor moved by her many wounds, you that are senseless and have a heart of stone.

But why marvel, brothers, at those who are intoxicated with the folly of impiety and are  
10 inspired with the bacchic frenzy of Satan? For just as the triumphant martyrs received the

Spirit through their divine love for Christ, and having conquered and surpassed nature, were above nature, so were Christ and the martyrs' persecutors filled with the spirit of evil, and enslaved themselves to the apostate power, and so also slipped away from nature and fell from it, not for better but for worse. And just as the first were elevated above the human  
15 condition, so much more were the latter washed away beneath it, becoming equal to the man-slaying demons; and reasonably so. For those who come to Christ become Christ's imitators through their virtue, but those who put themselves under the yoke of the Devil become, no doubt, like him and are his equals. But let us see what the opponent and adversary is devising and contriving again through his subordinates against the humble and prudent virgin.

(16) For when he saw that she endured like a man and withstood bodily torture, he pursued a punishment that was unbearable and shameful for her soul, as he thought. And such was it truly, and more severe than the previous ones. But to suffer for Christ, even when it seems indecent and disgraceful, is, however, nobler and fairer and more dignified than any  
5 adornment. For the governor, they say, commanded that she be paraded naked through that entire province and be whipped until she could not bear her wounds.

You certainly know, beloved ones, how much shame and humiliation this act brings to virgins, and especially to those like this pious maiden whom not even the sun had previously been able to enjoy, as it were. But he forced them to lead her about not one market or square  
10 or two, but also through villages and towns and cities. 'Through all that province', it is said. Indeed, this temptation is more severe and burdensome for the bashful and humble maidens than the pain of the burning heat or whip. Yet even so, she also endured this shameful punishment for her love and affection of Christ, who endured the cross for us, scorning the shame; for the virgin had already stripped herself of the old man and his passions, to which  
15 belongs the shame of garments. And so she did not think of herself as behaving unseemly; but like the first-formed men in paradise, who were naked before the appearance of the

passions of sin and were not ashamed - and only when the passions were stirred in them because of their disobedience, did they think that they behaved unseemly, unless they covered their nakedness with fig leaves - so did the virgin undress herself of the shame along  
20 with her other passions and returned to that original state before transgression and sin.

But in order that the abominable crowd does not see her most holy body wandering naked and ridicule her, she looked up to heaven and said 'O Lord, who cover the heaven with clouds, cover my naked body that it may not be seen by these ungodly men'. And when she said this, the Lord covered her with a white garment like an angel, and she stood like an  
25 adorned and embellished bride, who is brought in a procession and escorted from her paternal home to the prepared bridal chamber, and she was crowned with a martyr's band, and was exalted in her combat wounds for Christ and the purple of her blood, and surpassed the pure brightness and shining radiance of pearls, emeralds, hyacinths, precious stones, and fine gold.

What a wonder! Those lustful, lascivious, impudent, and most shameless men used to  
30 bring about the female martyrs of Christ wholly naked, in order to deride them in a parade, as they thought, and at the same time fix shamelessly their licentious gaze upon them. But Christ covered his athlete with a garment of grace, and walled off the looks of that shameful, wanton, and foul crowd, and proved their plans vain, and deceived their expectations.

(17) When they led her about in that entire province, they brought her to a town in which they also found the governor. Because he did not know what else to do – since all his contrivances proved fruitless and unaccomplished and he had lost hope – he issued a sentence against the much-tried martyr to suffer the capital punishment. Her father, then, filled with  
5 rage and satanic zeal, and nurturing inside him the eternal manslayer, the Devil, and in order to appear to be offering perfect worship to the abominable idols that he venerated, or rather to the evil spirits and demons that act through them, drew his sword and led her up to the mountain, desiring and longing to be the sole agent and committer of the bloodthirsty murder.

The fair and noble dove accepted with joy the death for Christ and turned to prayer and  
10 supplication. For now she hastened to attain the reward from above and was eager for her  
direct ascent into heaven. Nothing can prevent us from listening to the words of the martyr's  
prayer and bless our ears with them: 'Lord Jesus Christ, eternal, uncreated, crown of the  
martyrs, you who extended heaven and founded the earth, who sealed the abyss and walled  
the sea, who command the rain-bearing clouds to pour their water on the good and on the  
15 bad, who walked on the sea as if on land and did not wet your feet – for all obey your  
command, Jesus Christ, because they are the work of your hands – grant me this request and  
give grace to me, your servant: everyone who makes mention of me in honour of your name  
and makes the commemoration of the days of my martyrdom, do not remember their sins,  
Lord, on the day of your judgement but be merciful to them. For you know, Lord, that we are  
20 flesh and blood, the work of your pure hands'.

And when she said Amen, she restarted her prayer, saying 'O Lord, the God of powers, the  
creator of all life and all flesh, the healer of every disease and sickness, grant your servant  
that, whoever comes to the place where my body lies and the blessed water is found, will  
receive from you the cure of their soul and body, in order that your name is glorified in them  
25 too, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit'. And when she said Amen, there was a  
voice from heaven saying 'Come, my blessed athlete, rest in the chambers of my Father in  
heaven. All that you have asked has been granted to you.

And hearing this, the blessed martyr of Christ arrived at the place prepared for her and her  
head was cut off by her father's sword, together with Saint Juliana, who was martyred in the  
30 same place. And while her father Dioscorus was coming down from the mountain, fire fell  
from heaven and consumed him, so that not even the ashes could be seen or found.

(18) The martyr brought a truly noble end to her contest. For she prayed for her ordeal in  
the tower, and by praying she completed it. And what was the power of her prayer? She

asked Christ the Bridegroom himself to show mercy to those who commemorate her, forgive their trespasses and heal their sickness. And he accepted her supplication and promised to fulfil her entreaty, and gave pledge to her with his own voice and reassured her. And thus wholeheartedly she stretched her neck to the sword, while the child-murdering father mercilessly blew the strike. And while she was being escorted to the heavenly chambers and the prepared resting-place, he was descending to the innermost depths of Hades, and the darkest chambers, and the prepared hell. And while Barbara had fair angels as guides to her ascent, he had fearsome and dreadful demons dragging him against his will to his descent.

How could one appropriately mourn for you, pitiful wretch? How could you not shiver at cutting off the martyr's blessed head? How could your hand not grow numb when you brought down the deadly strike upon your own daughter? But, indeed, you received at once the rewards of your merciless cruelty, and you reaped a harvest fouler than the foul seed, and you were rightly pursued by Judas the traitor's revenge. For a thunder coming down from heaven burnt your foul body to ashes, and while here in this world the Sodomite fire struck you down, in the other world you will be welcomed by the inextinguishable fire of Gehenna; for you no longer deserved to live on, lest people point at you with their finger and call you father of the martyr. Your household cannot accept you from the moment you banished the all-praised virgin.

(19) But you, Christ's lamb, and dove, and bride, and whatever good and graceful and honourable appellation there is, hail, for you nobly ran through the pathway of struggle. Hail, for you worthily gained the prize of your contests. Hail, you to whom many rewards are owed for your many ordeals. Hail, you who prevailed over the surge of the passions of the flesh with sound reason. Hail, you who trained the senses of your body with elderly prudence at a young age. Hail, you who promised to preserve your virginity immaculate and undefiled even before your martyrdom. Hail, you who did not stain your bodily beauty with passions, but

offered and presented it untouched to your creator. Hail, you who, living in the tower as if in a safe keep and maidens' prayer room, offered up frequent and pure prayers to God, and were  
10 led up to the creator through the unerring contemplation of beings, and insatiately delighted in him who is the only truly benevolent and beloved.

Hail, you who symbolically depicted the Trinity by the triple light of the windows in the bathhouse that purifies the dirt of the body, and by way of signs represented the mystical and salvific baptism of the soul through the triple illumination. Hail, you who straightaway  
15 professed with the greatest clarity the faith to the consubstantial Trinity with your theological mouth. Hail, you who proclaimed with freedom of speech the one of the Holy Trinity who became incarnate for our salvation. Hail, you who scorned wealth, luxury, silk garments, precious stones, pearls soldered with gold, and all bodily adornment and beauty, and the joy of earthly pleasures, and exchanged them with noble and undefiled goods, which lie beyond  
20 the seeing of the eyes and the hearing of the ears and every sense and reason. Hail, you who nobly and bravely strengthened the tenderness of your age and the weakness of your female nature with firm and male spirit. Hail, you who were not cowardly in face of the pain of the tortures, but rather courageously handed yourself to all kinds of punishment and perversity. Hail, you who, though living in flesh, were deemed worthy of seeing Christ's glory, like the  
25 chosen disciples who were befittingly deemed blessed when they gazed at him with Elijah and Moses on the mount. Hail, you who endured for Christ the wounds of the whip, the floggings of iron tools, the friction of rough garments, the shedding of blood, the heat of fire, the mutilation of your limbs, the naked parading, and the taking away of your head and life, in order to receive thereafter an immortal body, one that shines with the light of  
30 incorruptibility and is dressed with the unspeakable and ineffable robe of glory.

(20) Men rightly admired you for your patience, angels naturally applauded and sang of your contest, demons shuddered at your hymns and resistance, and dressed themselves in



eternal shame and disgrace. How beautified and exalted is the female sex, and encouraged and exhorted to male bravery by your struggles! The foremother boasts cheerfully and rejoices in having had a daughter who fought against the hostile serpent that had once  
5 conquered her, and usurped him, and recalled the victory, and gained glorious trophies against him. And the holy of holies, the God-bearer and foremother, the virgin Mother of God, who first alone glorified the female sex, who reigns over all men and women, over all things earthly and heavenly, because she became the mother of the king of all, when she saw  
10 that you, in a young woman's flesh, conquered and triumphantly trampled down on him who boasts excessively that he can wipe out the sea and grasp the world in his hand like a nestling, and that you destroyed him triumphantly, pleased by your virtue she received you in her arms, and sat you and placed you near her, and granted you the highest honours and freedom of speech, and presented and introduced you to the royal throne.

(21) Any encomiastic speech about you, fluent, and skilfully crafted, and superfluous, is, therefore, at a loss, and is thrown into confusion, and hesitates to approach you out of fear. For it would be impossible, much-sung for and praiseworthy one, to hymn suitably the marvellous superiority of your admirable virtues. The art of rhetorical fluency, of course,  
5 through the skilful combination of words and with subtle and fluid persuasiveness, praises the beauty of the body and the attractiveness of the flesh, which are due to a body of good proportions and healthy complexion, and also very frequently, bodily strength, luxuries and the dignity of mortal noble birth, honourable offices (if they happen to exist), the nobleness of the native country, and ample wealth, which flows and slips away and easily changes  
10 hands. To turn all this into praise with the help of rhetoric is difficult and laborious. Besides, one day everything that rhetoric distinguished in categories and recounted is rapidly and presently destroyed and changes like a flower of grass that withers and perishes, and like the deceptive and illusionary vision of noble dreams, which at once seem both present and gone,

and so, naturally and accordingly, the harmony and cohesion of the finely-wrought encomia  
15 disappear with them.

And about you, too, o noble and prudent virgin, o triumphant and undefeated martyr, one  
finds for his speech easily and readily available and compiled all those things which have just  
now been named, and which men admire and bless and consider worthy of presenting, even  
though they are perishable and make words of praise look like thin air. For the virtue of your  
20 holy soul and intimacy with the creator have strengthened you and preserved you, and have  
made your bodily and worldly virtues ineradicable from human memory, and have prolonged  
their existence through the ages, and have rather multiplied them and increased them. ‘The  
entire world of things is for the trustworthy; but for the unbelieving not an obolus’, as the  
scriptural saying goes. For the present, and the future, and everything over which your  
25 Bridegroom rules, have been granted and presented to you as a dowry.

(22) Since, then, you have earned the prize of victory through the brightness of your  
earthly life and the splendour of your virtuous soul – both of which men hold worthy of  
praise – and have made them even brighter and more splendid through the steadfastness of  
your martyrdom, depart with joy to the hymn-resounding tabernacle in heaven, and leave  
5 behind the ornate speeches, uttered by a human tongue, which loudly confess their defeat. For  
if the reputation of your achievements exceeds human limits, how could the praise that  
actually befits you not surpass human understanding?

Depart, then, revered and fair maiden, and enjoy the rewards which are beyond this world.  
Depart to where words fall silent, being unable to describe in detail the glory of what is  
10 beyond words. Depart, and partake of the hallowed pleasure of goods beyond perception, in a  
place where reason gathers knowledge from partial visions, for it stays idle and is at leisure,  
while the mind approaches what is supernatural and intelligible as a single thing. Depart, to

where the multifarious deceit and error of our senses and the perceptible things stops and is abolished.

15       Receive the rewards of your victory and your glorious prizes. Receive the place of rest and relief that is owed to you for all your sweat and pain in the battle trenches. Receive the wreath of victory and the martyrs' headband which are due to those who have contended and are contending for Christ. Enjoy the inexpressible and inconceivable beauty and splendour of the Bridegroom. Enjoy the ineffable and mystical relationship and union with God in the  
20   heavenly chambers, than which there is indeed nothing more fortunate, nothing more blessed; you fall, o Christ's maiden, in no way short in reputation of the honourable deeds of the torch-bearing virgins, for you loved Christ, the Bridegroom, beyond measure, and were bound with affection for him. And for this, not only did you regard everything else as waste, but you also valued the desired one more than your very life and soul.

25       How justly you contended, and kept your faith unchanged at times dangerous and changing. How steadily and firmly you walked the path of piety. How willingly and wholeheartedly you endured the painful and excruciating tortures that were beyond human strength and were brought upon you for Christ's love. For all these, the crown of justice was placed upon your head, with which you were adorned in heaven. But not even here did Christ  
30   leave you without honour, 'for I live' he says 'and those that honour me I will honour'. And so, as was promised, healing water for all kinds of illnesses flows from your font, for everyone who approaches with faith, and for those particularly who suffer from pestilent wounds or other diseases and are wearied by bruises; and as soon as their bodies touch the healing water, they are quickly and miraculously delivered from their illness. And that  
35   location is renowned and well-known both among dwellers of neighbouring cities and distant habitants, and much sought after by those who seek cure.

But the fairness and healing grace you have been gifted with are not restricted to that region only, but for everyone who comes to you from all over the world in fervent faith and celebrates your annual memory, the pestilent wounds are healed, the unpleasant distress and  
40 grievances of every age disappear, the demonic forces are driven away by your rebukes, and overall those who call you to their help and defence are delivered from all dangerous circumstances.

(23) Do not abandon, then, pure ever-virgin, those who find refuge in you, when you look at them with sympathetic eyes, but also him who is delivering this worthless and fading petty speech of praise, which falls short of your excellent dignity but is, as far as possible, no less carefully prepared than he humbly intended; welcome kindly his disposition, and bending and  
5 nodding towards him, receive this small gift, just as when your Bridegroom accepted two mites from the widow, not paying attention to the amount of the given, but to the state of mind of the giver.

May I also find in you a kind attendant to the bruises of my soul and body, and a most ready protector against all circumstantial afflictions. And check gently the impulses and leaps  
10 of my passions, in order that I may correct my life according to what is right, and serenely cross the rough seas of this world toward the ageless life; and anchored in a saving harbour, may it come to pass that, through you, our common and merciful judge overlooks and even forgives my countless trespasses with the help of your intercession and acquaintance with him, although he has already justly condemned and passed his sentence against my  
15 sluggishness. And to all those who faithfully love and honour and revere your name, and find refuge in your charitable intercessions, become, o victorious and triumphant Barbara, o much-sung and unforgotten and blessed martyr and righteous athlete, become a representative of the kingdom of heaven, and a defender in troublesome circumstances, and a confident intercessor to the all-loving Christ, our God, to whom we owe glory, honour, and veneration

20     together with his eternal and unbegotten and venerable Father and the consubstantial and life-giving Spirit now and forever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

## | *Encomium of St John Chrysostom*

(1) Whoever attempts to touch upon your praise, o all-golden John, should – yes, should – be possessed of golden tongue and bring forth a gold-flowing outpouring of words. Besides, your own voice should be present; for it alone could deservedly succeed in your praise, and not least now. For the oblivion which accompanies people on earth before their departure from  
5 life was an accuser of your achievements in its opening court speech; for the wise somehow conceal their accomplishments, so that reality is not washed away by pride.

But because even the indistinct talk of children is dear to their fathers and two coins are more pleasing to God than the finest offerings – for he naturally assesses them not according to value, but rather according to one’s disposition – and because, in addition, I should not  
10 reject the exhortation of a God-loving man – for he is respected and I owe him utmost gratitude –, I will undertake this speech, though not unreservedly nor without restraint, but humbled with awe and also struck by desire, and I will offer you the first fruits of your own divine and holy teachings.

For I will receive no trifling praise for unraveling such a subject, if, of course, I do justice  
15 to its worth, but even if I fall short of it – which would be best not happen, though impossible – I shall meet with forgiveness, since I will have submitted to a fair defeat. Grant me, I pray, the fire-breathing grace of the Spirit. For you, too, yourself were reckoned the mouth of Christ, bringing out from unworthiness not one worthy person or two – for perhaps anyone among the common people could do this – but whole households and communities and cities.

(2) For beginning with yourself and truly making yourself into ‘Jerusalem’, the city of the living God, a dwelling of the Holy Spirit, you reached, through your word, the ends of the world everywhere on earth, to the extremities of the east and the west, the north and the south,

so that holy David's sacred prophecy might appropriately be said of you: 'His voice is gone  
5 out into all the earth, and his words to the end of the world'.

For you became a student of the truly absolute wisdom of Christ, who is the subsistent  
power of the God and Father, and following him in his footsteps, as far as possible, and  
imitating him, to the best of man's ability – for the Gadeira of nature is not transcendent – you  
established the notion of every virtue upon the deepest foundations of humility, by which  
10 alone God wished to save man and man finds salvation. That humility derives from faith is I  
think obvious to everyone. How would one otherwise submit himself to him who is better, if  
he does not believe him to be better and highest.

(3) As a servant of the Word, you became filled with words, with which you declared,  
through the Holy Spirit, that the divine and subsistent Word of God and Father is  
consubstantial with the Father, and to recognise beyond any doubt a unity worshipped in  
trinity and a trinity summed up into unity, displaying a kind of union and division that is  
5 beyond understanding, since neither is the unity confounded nor the trinity altogether divided,  
but rather the one is preserved in the other: the division of the subsistences in the unity of  
essence, and the unity and invariability of the nature in the division of the subsistences.

This is what you taught to the whole ecumene: one deity of three subsistences that  
communed wholly with us in one of its subsistences, which is the Son of God and Word; he  
10 who, though impassible, is united to a passible nature and is as if he is submitted to it and has  
a beginning, and takes on flesh and becomes corporeal; he who, though simple in nature, has  
become composite by assuming another nature and is known to be truly two-natured, bearing  
two natures after the union, from which there exists one unity, as we, too, proclaim. Each of  
the two natures is perfect in accordance with the definition and principle befitting each; the  
15 first has no beginning and is uncreated, the second has a beginning and is created; the one is  
impassible, invisible, impalpable, and uncircumscribed, the other passible, visible, palpable,

and circumscribed. Each of them possesses will, absolute freedom, and energy, while he, the one Christ, the Son and Lord, acts in both one way and the other. One serves as an instrument, the other operates with authority. Each has its proper energy and free motion, while the One  
20 acts in both one way and the other, and brings about through both our saving renewal, for the sake of which he compassionately emptied himself out.

(4) When you learnt these things, you passed them on. And you taught us how to build upon them the gold-gleaming and silver-shining dignity of deeds that are most noble, in order that we might not approach the discerning fire and be consumed by it like dry twigs; but rather that we might be cleansed more and more. We will thus destroy what is base and, being  
5 pure, be co-eternal with him who is pure and sets us ablaze and deifies us.

Who shall give me a skilled tongue worthy of your praise? Who shall carry me back to that day of old, when a divine flame shone forth in the form of tongues and rested upon each of the Apostles in a manner both simple and manifold, so that the single doctrine of the faith might be proclaimed in multiple tongues; and it united the divided into one and abolished the  
10 manifold deceit to which the tower-builders of old had consented, receiving as their reward the confusion of tongues and, therefore, dissent? Who shall grant me that tongue of the Spirit, to proclaim this inspired man's superior qualities which are over and above nature? Let there be before us an ocean of words and an abyss of thoughts. For even so, the grace of the Spirit does not yield to words; for whoever wishes to utter what is of the Spirit without the Spirit,  
15 chooses to see without light and lets darkness guide his vision. I therefore return again to him who is being praised, in order to light the lamp of knowledge from him that is the divine lantern, and pray that he may be the subject of honour and the giver of praise.

(5) Who was so eminent in speaking and mighty in wisdom – a comparison of the two would be inconclusive – that it is unclear in which he excelled more? Who was such a great and conspicuous model of virtue as not to need teaching for his instruction? Who poured forth



words like snowflakes, which were matched and reinforced by actions, that we should be able  
5 to say of him ‘that he began to do and teach’, as the divine Luke said of my God Jesus from  
whom we have inherited the being and the well-being? Who pursued praxis and theory,  
subjugating the pleasures of the flesh like fleshless and examining with God the things that  
are divine? Who attached in an orderly fashion and subjected his works to faith like members  
of a body to the soul, and gave life and soul to his works through faith; for to have one  
10 without the other is useless and unprofitable, even if one might unintentionally give  
superiority to faith? Who banished gluttony in such a way as he, and enslaved this mistress  
and muzzled her rage, controlling himself with pious thoughts and not becoming her courtier?

(6) In fact, he had such a surplus of self-control that he would not notice whether, or what  
kind, or how much food and drink he was offered. Our nature is immortal and our flesh  
changeable and void, and just as it is lacking in air – for it is impossible to live without  
breathing – so it is also necessary to compensate for the lack of the other things. For three are  
5 the things that are voided: solids, liquids and the breath; and the creator has by nature  
ordained that the appropriate restitution of each of them forms this very body. But the grace of  
the Spirit does not yield to the limits of nature ‘for man shall not live on bread alone, but on  
every word that comes from the mouth of God.’

Who was so pure in soul and mind besides the body, that dullness in relation to sexual  
10 intercourse was also ascribed to him? But it was not truly dullness; for it was not something  
instinctive nor some natural defect; rather he would rein in the irrational through the  
predominance of reason and hand over his every appetite to God, which was what he was  
created for; he would shun the smoothness of pleasure like fire fuel, and choose the roughness  
of virtue which brings ever-lasting leisure. He was thus being accustomed to these ways, and  
15 advancing little by little, he became ever more self-controlled, until he perfectly calmed his  
passion. He harnessed it through asceticism and brought it under control, acquiring a certain

habit in the course of time, and gradually made it part of his nature. For when toil meets with divine aid, it naturally grants apathy.

(7) Who was the first to renounce avarice for possessions, as well as the possessions themselves? He desired not to possess, as others desired to possess – which is the prop of passions, the denial of hope, the adversary of faith. For this reason, Paul too, the divinely speaking lyre of the Spirit, the resounding mouth of the apostolic tongues, critically named  
5 avarice ‘a second idolatry’. For if one lets go of divine providence and heaves up the anchor of hope, he cleaves to the gathering of wealth and places it above what is best, as if he were to live like immortal, and, like the sea, he does not have his fill, even if countless and enormous rivers of gold are flowing in. He that we now praise did not choose these things, but renounced everything: the right to boast about a glorious and conspicuous fatherland, I mean  
10 Antioch, which has received the helms of the East; distinguished birth and descent; gold, silver, precious stones, soft and illustrious garments, and in addition the glory of rhetoric and power.

(8) He became a disciple of Meletius, the president of the Church of the Antiocheans, a man abounding in the greatest divine gifts, who was celebrated by everyone for his way of life and teachings. Meletius received him, when he was about eighteen years old, because he was fond of the beauty of his heart and foresaw with prophetic eye the development of the young  
5 man. When he had exposed to him the elementary doctrines of piety, and had sufficiently dignified his character and ways, and had presented it him with the beauty of truth, he informed Christ upon him through the bath of regeneration, him that is ‘fair among the sons of men’, since he shines with the fairness of divinity.

He was about thirty years old, and thus, having arrived at the perfect stage of his physical  
10 and spiritual age and been promoted reader and teacher of the divine scriptures, removed himself to the desert by a rush of divine eros, since he wanted to wither his flesh, vigorous as

it was and seething with passions, lest the better become enslaved to the worse; for both desire to turn against each other, although the corruption of the body naturally hands control over to the soul.

15       And while he was living in the company of the nearby mountains, he was led to some elder that was Syrian in tongue, but not unskilled in knowledge, and was pursuing absolute self-control. John adopted his harsh lifestyle for four years and prevailed most easily over every cause of pleasure, with the Word joining him in the fight against suffering. Because he longed for anonymity, he took residence in a remote place, where he had an underground cave to  
20       boast as his wrestling school and as an arena of virtue. How many struggles he underwent there, receiving in exchange the Spirit's aid according to the multitude of his pains. How many ascending steps he put into his heart, being bathed in the light of the Spirit; he kept growing in spiritual strength, and through both action and theory, exiled every Egyptian belief from his soul and body.

(9) Like another Moses, with whose life he was gifted, he abandoned Egypt, that is, life in this world and all its affairs, and moved, so to speak, outside life. Through the hardships of his lifestyle, he saw God gleaming in the bush – for sweat precedes virtue, and just as the rose grows from a thorny branch, so virtue, this fragrant plant, has come to grow from toil for us to  
5       scent God. Thus he released himself from lowly concerns and abandoned earthly affairs like a pair of sandals, and arrived at the place of God through his mind and saw God, as far as it was possible. He returned to Egypt once again, in order to drive many, countless, masses of people out of Egypt, and release them from the tyranny of the Pharaoh, the ruler of this world; to transfer himself and others to the promised land on high, through the red sea, that is, His holy  
10       water and blood; to transfer those who lived in the desert of suffering and were running from Amalek, when they extended their uplifted hands in the shape of a cross to him that extended his hands on the cross for our sake, and received through it the prize-bearing victory.

He lived, then, two years in the cave, keeping a watchful guard over his soul and his body. He was preoccupied with the study of the Holy Scriptures as if he was not of flesh, and  
15 banished every sort of ignorance by inviting the light of true knowledge to dwell in him. And if he had to have some sleep, in order for the human nature to regain its powers and recover itself, he fulfilled this function of nature while standing upright, so that he did not lie down for those two years, neither at night nor in the daytime. Thus his lower abdomen was mortified, the strength of his kidneys was relaxed, and the inflammation of the parts around the navel  
20 disappeared, and so his body became of no use to him.

(10) He returned to his home country once again, and joined the Church in the order of presbyter, paying her the rewards for rearing him, like a grateful child to the mother that nursed him. By divine providence, he was moved to the purple-robed city and wedded the daughter of the Great Hierarch. For it was not possible to hide such a radiant holy man under  
5 a bushel, on whom the timeless and everlasting light had rested, but he had to be placed on a tall and visible lampstand, in order that from a conspicuous, middle vantage point, his voice could resound to the ends of the earth like a gold-beaten trumpet.

Who guided the Church like him, and put it in order, and displayed a humble spirit despite the high status of his position? Who harnessed wrath and anger so much as to acquire an  
10 upright gentleness, which abhors whatever is contrary to virtue and claims justice from things unjust? Who was so great in love, from which mercy is born, that until today there are living monuments bearing the signs of his virtue? For mercy was the subject of his every speech, in order that he might lead to the habit of compassion and generosity those who delve into his words. He convinced everyone to give God what is his own; to give the perishable and  
15 changeable to him that compensates us with things stable and imperishable; to store in heaven like a treasure the free gift of compassion, which is not expendable nor can be treacherously plundered; to cleanse sin through almsgiving and injustice through acts of mercy to the poor;

to feed the hungry with bread in the spirit of the gospel and offer drink to the thirsty; to clothe the naked and dress the unclad and shelter the homeless out in the open; to visit the sick and  
20 step in to watch over them and reap mercy through mercy.

(11) Who expelled wrath, and also persuaded his flock to expel it, because it closes the merciful heart of God to those who possess it? ‘For what you did, you shall receive back’, it is said; ‘with the measure you use, it shall be measured back to you’; for who forgives, will be forgiven. And in reverse, the sequence utters back: who does not forgive, will not be  
25 forgiven. Who condemned jealousy and envy and wrong judgment? He taught that it is most noble to be envied; for whatever is envied is good. Apart from most shameful, envy is self-condemned; it is the most unjust and reckless of passions, the opposite of mercy; if indeed mercy means to feel pain at someone else’s troubles, envy means to feel pain at their good fortune, not on account of one’s self, but on account of those to whom good fortune befalls; it  
30 means that the proliferation of another man’s goods, increases one’s own suffering. And he taught not to judge our fellow-servants, that we may not be judged by the just measure of the only arbiter, who weighs on the balance his judgement for us, and not to seize the authority of the master. For one is the arbiter who by nature cannot be judged, because he is the only free from sin, he is the ruler, not the ruled. ‘Forgive’, he was crying out the good news, ‘and you  
35 will be forgiven.’

Who expelled the grief that leads one to death and rather taught the grief that causes joy? The one is saving, since it represents our sorrow for missing God, if indeed those that are experts in these things understood ‘sin’ to mean ‘miss the mark’; the other is caused by the deprivation of pleasure and is truly soul-destroying and utterly discreditable. There is no way  
40 – it is impossible – for grief to appear for any reason other than the deprivation of a certain desire. The grief for missing the mark of something is just such as the desire is: if the desire is virtuous, then the grief is most noble; if not, the case is different. One is the best of desires,

that which leans towards what is best; and so the desire for the opposite, has an opposite effect too. Did he not stimulate slack indifference by teaching the memory of death? He  
45 taught to shake off oneself the indifference that cuts the sinews of the soul's power; and in its place he invited the fear of God, and fervently encouraged people to strain all their powers in praying and singing and to radically cast sluggishness from their souls, watching over their hearts with all their strength, that death may not mount their hearts as if through little doors, that is, the senses.

(12) He taught to study the scriptures, becoming an interpreter of them and instructor. In a prophetic spirit, he investigated the secret depths of the Spirit and broke open the cover of the 'letter' and made manifest the splendour that lay within, and all this with an attitude that did not betray arrogance or vainglory. For he knew, he knew how to trample down paltry glory,  
5 which needlessly ruins all effort and ravages the harvest of virtue. He knew that vainglory opens a hole in the soul's vessel of virtues like a jar, and by preventing the inflow on account of the outflow, it makes the vessel no less empty; it thus offers toil without gain and causes pain that gives no share to profit. He knew that to God befits all glory and exaltation, but to man humility, for it is the noblest road to exaltation, it is Israel's ladder, which lifts man up to  
10 God and invites God to dwell in his heart.

(13) He humbled himself to the creation for the sake of the Lord Creator, because only the creation does not bring dishonour upon God and does not overlook and overturn the divine law. He rejected everything pompous, grim and arrogant; his expression was gentle when they addressed him, his words kind and seasoned with divine salt. His manners were graceful, the  
5 smile on his face was elegant, not bursting into unrestrained laughter. For since he knew that virtues spring forth near vices and from neighbouring sources, he was on guard of himself and obeyed him who commands what is best. He was a judicious money-lender who refused every counterfeit coin but accepted the drachma that bore the royal image. By the breeze of the Holy

Spirit he cast off from his heart, like dust, every kind of vice, and irrigated and enriched  
10 himself with its opposite virtue, and 'like an olive tree flourishing in the house of God' he  
became known to the Church as an ever-blooming tree which offered God its ripe fruit: the  
multitudes of people he had saved. Or like a palm tree he protected himself with the thorns of  
appropriate reproof and reproved most prudently those who extended their household over  
that of their neighbours and hastened to seize the vineyard of Naboth, while Elijah was not  
15 there to reproach them. But the Holy Spirit awoke Elijah anew, for it dwells in the soul of the  
just and generation after generation appoints prophets who are champions of virtuous deeds  
and despise everything evil and absurd, inviting and replacing it, instead, with everything  
lawful and just.

(14) Thus this holy man became the judge of injustice, although he did not judge by it –  
alas! how could he? – but denounced it and made it outcast, and prevented those who  
committed injustice from approaching the walls of God. Now, there was a widow that was  
wearing him out by distracting him frequently; for her heart was worn out by the wrong done  
5 to her and she held on to him as if he was some fortified and indestructible refuge. She had  
long deliberated her decision with precaution. For whom else could she find to assist her with  
her misfortune? Some official? But she who gave offence ruled over all officials. The king?  
But his judgement was softened by his attachment to that woman; for the offender was flesh  
from his flesh, bones from his bones. And she who should bridle the unjust, hastened to  
10 commit injustice.

What have you done, lawless woman? You are dressed in a purple robe, for you have been  
appointed protector of the law, and yet you trample down the law? O unspeakable wisdom of  
him who said 'give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before  
swine.' For having trampled down the sacred and divine law, namely, the precious pearl, she  
15 turned against the needy widow and shattered her, snatching from her her daily livelihood.

You dominate the land and the gift-bearing sea, yet you run after the poor piece of land of the destitute widow, whose life you deserve in exchange. In word you guarantee the law; in deed you renounce it. Were you not ashamed before the father of orphans and defender of widows? But he who is always nourished by God's message paid heed to the God-inspired utterance:

20 'Defend the orphan and plead for the widow.' And having the fire-breathing Elijah guide his eagerness, he imitated John the Baptist's liberty of speech: You cannot have, he said, the vineyard of your sister. Do you think you can digress from the natural order, even if you increased your reputation by holding a tyrannical office? When authority is modelled on the law, it becomes kingship, but when it is made up of elements of lawlessness, it is rightly

25 called tyranny. Have you not read the dramatic story about Jezebel? Why do you enter this sacred sheepfold? Walk away from God's royal dwelling. The sacred church is a bath in which to wash away one's sins. The tax collector received Jesus into his house and scattered rightly what he had exacted wrongfully. You too, daughter, – for you are still a member of the church, even though a non-functioning one, and I treat you with care in hope of your

30 salvation, though salvation without repentance is non-existent – give back righteously, what you wrongfully stole.

(15) Thus he spoke but did not persuade her. She shut her ears as if with a shield and did not pay attention to the God-loving and wise man that could heal her. And because he saw that her passion was completely incurable, he drove her out of the holy chambers, since she did not wear her bridal dress. And then? Again Jezebel rises up against the prophet. Yet by no

5 means does the herald of truth give way nor does he hand himself in. He is sentenced, however, to exile like a voice of one crying in the wilderness. What a monstrous conception! Once more the serpent hastens with his charms to banish the man of God from the Church and indeed he did not fail to fulfil his wish.



For a little time, God's eyesight was overcome with sleep in patient expectation, and so he  
10 was exiled from the royal city. Yet that was rather the planning of God as He invigorates  
triumphantly the manly spirit of his dear servants. For he considered the foreign land like his  
own, and each place to be God's place, being himself of God, and was wandering in Him and  
with Him. He was called to foreign parts together with Abraham, he was banished from  
foreign kingdoms with Moses, he ran away to the cave of Choreb with Elijah, and with God  
15 Jesus he took flight to Egypt, that his manly spirit would become known through his struggles  
and he would reap the rewards which befit him; that he would in a way imitate Job and God  
would say to him: 'Will you also annul my judgment, that you may be righteous?'; that he  
would preach the gospel to yet more people.

(16) And if some others also became accomplices in this unlawful exile, let us keep silence  
out of respect for the Fathers, lest we might receive the punishment of Ham by mocking at the  
Fathers. For the account of these events has many twists and turns: some of the bishops were  
pouring forth wickedness, while others by all means rejected such an attitude and condemned  
5 the queen, who was threatening to restore the pagan temples that had only just been razed to  
the ground, unless they, too, voted in favour of the persecution of the holy man. But let only  
auspicious words prevail; for it is not good to compare the Fathers, lest we might appoint  
ourselves their judges.

(17) In that way or another, the president is removed from his Church, the head from the  
body, and the flock is widowed from the good shepherd, who in imitation of Christ always put  
his soul in defence of his sheep. And the Church longed for its preacher, the sheep for their  
shepherd and his flute, the guards of Christ for their commander and for the trumpet that gives  
5 the order of battle against the imperceptible enemy, the widows for their defender, the  
orphans for their father, the sick for their nurse, the strangers for their guide; the purple-robed  
city for the genuine gold which itself adorns and embellishes the royalty with the priesthood

and bestows grace to the royal scepter and crown through spiritual maturity; the ears of God-loving people for the man of golden speech and golden mouth; and, if this does not seem a  
10 bold statement, Christ went with him into exile, for he dwelled in him. How could I describe without tears this unbearable misfortune? Even a heart of stone would be unable not to shed tears; for when Moses struck the stone with his staff, it poured water; and so a tough heart will shed streams of tears like rivers when it is struck by the extent of this tragedy.

(18) All of a sudden, however, the kingdom falls apart and again the Pharaoh cries out to him who has seen God and asks to protect him from the plague. And so it happened; for immediately John returned from the exile by an order of the king and the plague died out. This is how God knows to honour his own, for the Lord says ‘those that honour me I will  
5 honour.’ Again Christ’s flock rejoices, for he who suffered everything for all of them returns to them. Christ’s followers are joyful, they become richer and increase in numbers while they receive in the fertile land of their hearts John’s words like seeds of the Spirit.

But the Devil has been injured and, as is his custom, rises again against the preacher, and the impotent one demands the surrender of the courageous bulwark of the Church and seeks to  
10 destroy him. And thus he plunders the wealth that cannot be plundered, and takes control of his body, as if he had not already undergone the rebuke of Job. Once more the just is exiled, the groom is banished from the wedding chamber, and the Church removes her wedding jewels and shaves her head because he is away from her. A fire from the bishop’s seat, like a God-driven thunderbolt, ravages the church and the Senate. And once again wailing and tears,  
15 crowds striving to leave with him or abandon the city, since for them death was preferable to losing John. But alas! The evil prevailed because God permitted, according to his judgement which only he knows.

(19) So, once again, departing from the city and moving from country to country, he pursued and seized him who he desired, considering Christ to be the life and death to be

profit, having fought the good fight, preserved the faith, run the course and carried with him the prize of his struggles, the wreath of justice. But even in death, he did not abandon his  
5 bride, he who loves his bride and children, nor did he deprive his children of his grace, but, through divine providence and judgement, he was brought to the kingdoms in the most appropriate way, the body to the visible realm, the spirit to the invisible, thus remaining preacher of the divine word, until Christ comes again, with whom he will be glorified, delighting in his joy and beauty.

10 This, o father of fathers, is my indistinct speech to you. But may you watch over us your namesakes and give us in return the affinity with the creator, who is Christ, the eternal bliss, to whom belongs the glory and the power, now and forever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

## | *The Passion of St Artemius*

(1) As I am about to narrate the manly deeds of the great and glorious martyr Artemius and his contest, and the nobility which he acquired from above and from his ancestors, O sacred assembly and divinely gathered congregation, I invoke the martyr himself and the grace of the Spirit overshadowing him to assist me in my discourse and aid me. And I implore you and I  
5 beg for your prayers, that this undertaking may be free of difficulty and offence for me and that I may proceed straight to the narrative of his martyrdom and confession which I set out to relate.

And while I undertake this task, let no one criticise me by considering the first and ancient record of this marvellous and celebrated man; for he who composed it wrote as the occasion  
10 then demanded and as best he could, since things at that time were affected by great tumult and upheaval. He was also not one of those who were accomplished and concerned with rhetoric but simple and unpretentious, interested only in the truth and focused on the narration in any way whatever and, as the proverb says, having touched with his fingertip the sacred study of words.

(2) Just as, then, not even I myself am adequate and competent to narrate the story, even if my love for the martyr attracts me and dominates my thought and forces me to speak. Yet he was praiseworthy for his willingness and his faith concerning the martyr because he dared even in any way whatever to touch upon the narrative concerning his martyrdom, especially  
5 when the apostate and impious Julian had ordered that neither a written account nor any other kind of record should be made for those caught as martyrs for Christ, as the former emperors had decreed, but that most of them should perish without a defence. When this order reached everywhere, those who confessed Christ were punished, but according to the prevailing

custom none of the public secretaries or so-called shorthand writers paid heed to the order.  
10 For the unlawful one was eager to obliterate even the very glory of the martyrs. So, with difficulty, some hid themselves in certain gloomy and unlit places and dared to touch upon this kind of written accounts, fearing the sovereign's fierceness.

Many tens of thousands of Christians throughout the whole world were thus destroyed without being deemed worthy of any interrogation according to the prevailing custom. But  
15 this did not harm at all the athletes of Christ, the fact of not having a written account; for those whose names God recorded in heaven had no need of the accounts of men. But enough of these things.

(3) Now I, O sacred assembly and divinely gathered people of Christ, holy nation and royal priesthood, having encountered many works, and especially of those who compiled the histories and deeds of the emperors, and then those concerned with the history of the Church, and having found the name of the martyr heralded and circulating here and there, with  
5 everyone admitting that he was a distinguished and acclaimed man, did not think to bury these things in the depths of oblivion but to bring them into view and present them to your ears, since you love Christ and the martyrs, lest the great excellences of the divine martyr might be concealed in a few syllables; and at the same time I was also eager to delight your ears with the accounts of this story and the manly deeds of the martyr that have newly come to light.

(4) Many, then, of those who wrote histories made mention of this celebrated man: Eusebius, called 'of Pamphilus', Socrates, of the heresy of Novatus, and Philostorgius, who also was of the heresy of Eunomius, as well as Theodoretus, and many others.

Of these, Eusebius, who lived and became known in the time of Constantine the Great and  
5 was the most learned of the bishops of the time, represents the martyr as one who was a member of the senate and a very close acquaintance of the emperor and a most faithful pursuer of the association or rather friendship with Constantius, his son. For it seems that the

blessed man never yet ceased his friendship towards Constantius, indicating the glorious and magnificent nature of his character; in fact, Philostorgius, even if he is an ardent adherent of  
10 the heresy of Eunomius, nevertheless, exalts the martyr above all men, and shows great constancy and precision as regards his deeds, underscoring the nobility of the martyr which he possessed from earlier times, even before he touches on his ordeals of martyrdom. I too will therefore start with the account of him as the writings of the ancients relate.

(5) [They tell about] how, when idolatry had recently ceased and the deception of demons had been extinguished by the benevolence of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ shown to the blessed and celebrated Constantine, the most splendid and pious emperor, the son of Constans and the blessed Helena, how Christ recalled him from the vain deceit of idols, and  
5 about the display of the life-giving cross in the sky; and about how he prevailed over his enemies and the lawless emperors through the operation and power of the honourable cross, and how the God-beloved horn of the Christians was lifted up, strengthened and increased by his zeal and faith, so that the teaching of Christ might fill the whole world, and all the altars of the idols and statues and all the temples might be destroyed wherever they happened to be on  
10 earth, and so that the churches of God, which the Christ-hating and impious emperors laid waste, might be rebuilt.

(6) While, then, these things were happening, the Devil, who envies good things, could not bear such change, but he roused a storm and upheaval through his own shield-bearers. For Arius, after whom this madness was named, while he was a presbyter of the Church in Alexandria, threw it into terrible confusion by advancing a doctrine that was unlawful and full  
5 of every kind of blasphemy, for he said that the only-begotten Son of God from before the ages was a creation and alien from the essence of the God and Father. So for this reason, the council of the 318 holy fathers at Nicaea was convened and, deposing Arius, declared that the Son of God and our Lord Jesus Christ is of the same essence with the Father. But the histories

of the heathens relate these things, and many of our own have examined them in detail and  
10 articulated them clearly. As for me, this occasion is not suitable for spending time on these  
matters, since a more exact discussion and examination of them is needed. For now I will  
narrate how the end of his life arrived.

(7) The Christ-loving emperor Constantine advanced to the thirty-first year of his reign and  
arrived at the thirty-second, when he learnt that the Persians were preparing for war against  
him, and setting out from his own city, he arrived as far as Nicomedia in Bithynia. There he  
died from a plot by his own brothers, who administered poison to him, after a comet, as they  
5 say, had foretold his death.

Constantine had these brothers on his father's side: Dalmatius, Anaballianus, and  
Constantius; for he was the only son his father Constans had from Helena while he was still in  
private life. From Theodora, the daughter of Maximianus, surnamed Herculus (Herkoullios),  
he had other sons: the aforementioned Dalmatius, Hannibalianus (Anaballianos), and  
10 Constantius, whom Constantine honoured as Caesars and *nobilissimi*. Of these, Constantius  
with his wedded wife gave birth to Gallus and Julian, surnamed the Transgressor because he  
foreswore Christ and was inclined towards the Greek religion, who also punished the great  
martyr of Christ and much-contending Artemius during his reign because of his faith in Christ  
and his God-inspired zeal. But these things happened later, after some time.

(8) Now, having narrated the events of the early years, I will turn again my discourse to the  
events that happened to the martyr, how and by what means the lawless and transgressor  
Julian achieved the dignity of emperor, and how the martyr of Christ Artemius ran in the all-  
holy stadium of the confession of Christ.

5 As soon as Constantine the Great died, the empire of the Romans was divided into three  
realms, which his sons Constantine, Constantius, and Constans shared between them. And to  
the first, Constantine, were allotted Upper Gaul and the regions beyond the Alps, the British

Isles and as far as the western Ocean; to Constans, as the last son, was allotted Lower Gaul, or at any rate, Italy and Rome itself. Constantius, the second of Constantine's sons, who was  
10 then in charge of the affairs of the East, fighting against the Persians, received the share of the East; and he made Byzantium, renamed Constantinople and New Rome, the imperial capital, and made tributary to his realm and government the regions from Illyricum to the Propontis that were subject to the Romans, and Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia, Egypt, and all the islands.

(9) The great Artemius accompanied Constantius on every occasion and matter just as a very good friend and one of those who are distinguished for their virtue and education, and as an ardent adherent of the Christian faith. No one has handed down to us a written record of his native land and family, except that the thrice-blessed was of noble and great ancestry. Whence  
5 the following has also been recorded about him, that it was him who was ordered by Constantius to undertake the recovery of the all-holy relics of Christ's apostles Andrew, Luke, and Timothy, as the account will explain as it proceeds. I will narrate all these things in order, going over the events year by year and presenting them with the accuracy that is appropriate for these things.

10 As has been said, then, while there were three emperors and each of them was ruling over his own share, the first of them, Constantine, arose from his own portion and went up to the inheritance of his youngest brother, who had gone abroad to Rome, and attempted to commit an injustice against his brother; and he slandered him, while he was not present, on the grounds that the inheritance had not been fairly divided, and that he had appropriated the  
15 greatest part of the territory belonging to him. But the generals and guards of the country, whom Constans had appointed, said that they could make no changes, whether small or great, without his opinion and decision, for it was unholy. So Constantine stripped himself in preparation for war and took up arms against him who had done no wrong. Constantine, thus,



fell fighting in battle, desiring the portion of others, and lost even what he had thought he  
20 securely possessed.

(10) His people therefore went over to Constans, and the whole realm of the West became  
subject to him, although he had not pursued it, for it was God who gave this judgement, when  
he said: 'Do not move the boundaries of your fathers nor seize the furrow of your neighbour.'  
For who acts wickedly against his neighbour brings destruction upon himself, drawing down  
5 God's justice upon him. Constans, then, ruled over the entire western realm, joining the two  
inheritances into one and making both parts a single realm.

Meanwhile, not much time passed before Constans also lapsed into revelry and drinking  
and unusual erotic amusements, and light-heartedly gambled with his realm, disgracing the  
greatness of emperorship. For this very reason, he, too, became the subject of a plot by one of  
10 his generals, Magnentius, and, along with his emperorship, he also lost his life. When he fell,  
Magnentius held rule, and with him Nepotianus and Vetricianio (Brettaniōn) received a share in  
the tyrannical rule.

(11) When Constantius learnt this from his sister's letters, he set out from the East and  
came to the West where he waged war against both and conquered them with all his might,  
Vetricianio having defected to him. It was also when the sign of the Cross, enormous and  
marvellously revealed in its entirety as to outshine the light of the day with the force of its  
5 radiance, appeared over Jerusalem particularly around the third hour of the day, during the  
feast called Pentecost, extending from the place called Calvary to the Mount of Olives, where  
the Saviour made his ascension. Constantius, then, ruled over the whole empire, being the  
only one of the sons of Constantine the Great who remained.

(12) When, therefore, he gazed upon the size of his realm, he felt dizzy, since he was only  
human and had no one from his family to support him – for neither did he have children nor  
were any of his brothers left – and fearing that some other usurper might again revolt against

him and rise up against his sovereignty, he considered taking one of his kinsmen as coheir and  
5 supporter of his reign. And this is what he did by promoting Gallus, Julian's brother, as  
Caesar. Gallus was his cousin on his father's side; for Constantius, the father of Gallus and  
Julian, was the brother of Constantine the Great. So he appointed him at Sirmium and gave  
him as his wife his own sister Constantia for the sake of loyalty and stability, and gave him  
officials whom he himself had appointed – for this was not permitted him, even though he  
10 was Caesar. He dispatched Thalassius as praetorian prefect, and put Montius in charge of  
imperial affairs as *quaestor*, as these men are usually called, whom he also made a patrician.

Gallus, since he had been sent at that time by Constantius, attended to the affairs of the  
East. As soon as the Persians learnt about him, they took fright, hearing that he was young  
and impetuous in his enterprises, and so they no longer made expeditions against the Romans.  
15 And he was in Antioch in Syria, while Constantius settled affairs in the West. And it was  
particularly at that time that the Roman Empire was genuinely at peace, guarded by both. And  
so these things happened this way.

(13) But Gallus, when he put on the Caesar's purple robe and already began to climb the  
first steps of the emperorship, did not retain the same attitude and loyalty which he had shown  
to Constantius, but became overbearing, insubordinate, and implacable in anger. For by  
adopting an importunate spirit and inconsistent decisions, he transgressed the terms and  
5 disparaged the conventions which he had agreed with Constantius, managing things in a more  
kingly fashion and making his arrangements with great insolence and pretension. Regarding  
the officials whom Constantius had sent out with him as arbiters of imperial and civil affairs,  
namely, the praetorian prefect Domitian (for Thalassius had died) and the *quaestor* Montius,  
he ordered his soldiers to tie ropes to their feet, because they did not obey him and assist his  
10 unreasonable and ungovernable impulses, commanded them to be dragged to the marketplace,  
and killed them both, men who were distinguished for their rank and were found superior to

every gain and profit. The bishop of the city wrapped their bodies and buried them out of respect for their unsurpassable virtue.

(14) As soon as Constantius learnt about the incident, he sent for Gallus to appear before him. And he, knowing that he was not summoned for a good reason, but then again realising that, should he not want to obey, he would have to wage war and straightaway take up arms against Constantius, chose rather the way of peace, and sent his wife ahead to appease  
5 Constantius, while he went of his own bidding to face the danger. Constantia set out first to meet her brother in advance, since she was eager to excite his respect for her husband, so that he would devise no harm against him. But because of her great haste on the journey, she fell ill, while she was travelling, and when she reached Bithynia, she died in a travel station of that province called Gallicanum.

10 Gallus, although he considered this unexpected incident as a great misfortune, nevertheless went further and did not move from his decision. When he reached a city of the Norici called Poetovium (Pytabiōna), the general Barbatio was sent there from Milan, where Constantius happened to be at the time. He stripped Gallus of the purple robe, and changing his status to that of a private citizen, sent him into exile on an island of Dalmatia.

(15) While Gallus was led away to the island, those who had organised the whole thing against him, especially the eunuch Eusebius, who held the rank of *praepositus*, and those who had joined him, persuaded Constantius to eliminate Gallus as soon as possible. He was persuaded and sent men to kill him; but while they were already arriving, Constantius was  
5 once more inclined to mercy and sent a letter by different messengers redeeming Gallus from his affliction. But Eusebius and his men persuaded the official who was sent not to come forward and present the letter before he learnt that Gallus had been killed. This is what happened, and Gallus died.

Constantius, fearing about the situation, that he might not be able to remain in possession  
10 of the whole empire on his own, particularly since the Gauls rose up very keenly and  
whenever they wished in support of usurpations due to their bodily strength and lightness of  
mind, already regretted making away with Gallus, and reckoning that it was far safer to share  
his rule with his kin than with strangers and foreigners, he sent for Julian, the brother of  
Gallus, from Ionia, and proclaimed him Caesar in Milan. He gave him in marriage his own  
15 sister Helena and swore pledges with him, and sent him to Gaul to protect the empire there,  
while he himself came to Illyricum and stayed in Sirmium.

(16) When he heard that the barbarians beyond the Danube were going to campaign against  
the Roman empire, he departed from Sirmium and marched to the Danube, and after spending  
a long time on the bank itself, he marched back to Thrace, since the swarms of barbarians had  
stayed calm.

5 When he happened to be in the land of the Odrysians, where the emperor Hadrian had built  
a city and given his name to the place, he was informed by one of the bishops that the bodies  
of Christ's Apostles Andrew and Luke were buried in Achaea, Andrew in Patras and Luke in  
Thebes in Boeotia.

When the emperor Constantius heard this, he rejoiced at the news and shouted aloud and  
10 said to those present, 'Call Artemius to me.' When he quickly came up to him, he said, 'I  
congratulate you, most God-loving of all men.' Artemius replied to him, 'O emperor, I pray,  
may you also rejoice in everything and may nothing troublesome ever befall you.' And the  
emperor said, 'My best of friends, do you seek anything more gracious than the discovery of  
the bodies of Christ's Apostles?' The great Artemius said, 'O lord, who and whence is the  
15 man who has revealed this treasure to us today?' Constantius said, 'The bishop of Achaea,  
who now presides in Patras; but go, most excellent of men, and quickly arrange their transfer  
to Constantinople.'

(17) When the great Artemius heard these things from the emperor, he made his way to the Apostles, in order to translate their all-holy relics to Constantinople.

He who wrote the account says the following about Constantius and the martyr. It is, in fact, said about Constantius that not only was he zealous and devoted in his faith to God, even  
5 if he was favourably disposed to the Arian heresy, led astray by the impious and most godless Eusebius, the bishop of Nicomedia, but that in other respects, too, he was moderate and paid special attention to decency, had attained absolute self-control in his lifestyle and other habits, and showed great zeal for the churches, aspiring to surpass by far his own father in his enthusiasm for this matter. And that he built the greatest church in the city of his father near  
10 the Senate, starting from beneath the building and from the foundations, and constructed there an enormous church as a place of worship, honouring his father's tomb. And that he brought over from Achaea the Apostle Andrew, as I said earlier, and translated him there; and that he even translated there Luke the Evangelist also from Achaea, and Timothy from Ephesus in Ionia.

(18) Artemius was one of the most excellent of men, and was the one ordered to arrange their translation. As a reward for this service, the emperor, at the request of the bishops, gave him the rule of Egypt. This is what he who compiled the history says about the martyr, testifying about him that even before the contest of martyrdom he was respected by all  
5 because of the radiant virtue of his life.

As regards Luke, Anatolius, the eunuch among those who belonged to the imperial chamber, related the following story, having himself experienced his holiness. This Anatolius, then, was saying that he had fallen ill and that his illness was already too grave to be treated according to the doctors' art. While, then, the coffin in which Luke was lying was being  
10 carried from the sea to the church, after its bearers had sailed in, he stood eagerly under it and carried it with the rest of the bearers to the extent that his strength allowed him, and at that

moment he was immediately freed from his illness, and continued the rest of his life for quite a few years.

15 So then the church of the Apostles was first built by Constantius, even if Justinian later improved it in a more splendid fashion and adorned it more richly with better materials. This is now the church where the bodies of the Apostles rest, and is named after the common name of the Apostles.

(19) The great Artemius, then, was on his way to Egypt invested with the rank of *dux*. Constantius set off from Constantinople and took the road to Syria. And when he reached the great city of Antioch, he encamped there, preparing for the war against Persia. While he was spending time in the city preparing his army, letters reached him revealing Julian's revolt. For  
5 Julian, as I also explained earlier when I gave an account of these things, after being proclaimed Caesar by Constantius to protect the western territories in Gaul, put on the diadem and seized the higher office of emperorship, since he could no longer endure to be in the rank of Caesar. When he took over power, he no longer kept his mind on small things nor did he think that he should delay, but wishing to bring already all of Europe that was subject to the  
10 Romans under his rule, he organised the army, marched through Germany to the Danube, and after occupying the further bank, marched through its towns, escaping the attention of both prefects, the so-called Taurus in Italy and Florentius in Illyricum. But when he came to the Pannonians (Paionai), he crossed over to the other side of the river and soon subjected all the land of Illyricum to his rule, Italy, and all the nations as far as the western ocean that belonged  
15 to the Roman dominion.

(20) When Constantius learnt about this from letters, he was alarmed, as was reasonable, and feared most about Constantinople, lest Julian might arrive there, as indeed he was considering, and bring the city under his control; he therefore made haste, as far as was possible, to occupy it first. While his army was being gathered together, since it was dispersed

5 in the cities of the East, and was going to start preparations for such a long journey, he sent word to the bishops to arrive at Nicaea before him as soon as possible; for he planned to convene a second synod there, incited by the impious Arians against the doctrine of consubstantiality. But when he crossed Cilicia and reached the so-called fountains of Mopsus, an illness suddenly befell him and was no longer able to move on. When he realised that he  
10 was already very ill and would not survive, he sent immediately for Euzoius, the bishop of Antioch, and let him baptise him. After being baptised and living for a while further, he departed from life there, having ruled for a total of forty years, half of them with his father and the rest alone.

When the army mourned for him and performed for him what was customary, they placed  
15 him in a coffin, preparing the corpse according to custom in order for it to be preserved, and after placing it upon a carriage, conveyed it to Constantinople, each man accompanying it in his own arms and in the same order in which they had been ranked by their generals when he was alive.

(21) Thus they carried the deceased to Constantinople, and Julian followed along, arriving from Illyricum and having already secured the whole empire, since no one dared oppose him after Constantius' death. While the deceased was being brought to the Church of the Apostles, since they intended to lay him to rest near his father, he led the bier himself, having removed  
5 the diadem from his head. When they had buried him, he immediately departed to the imperial palace and at once put on the diadem, and took possession of the government, for now he alone had assumed control of the entire Roman empire. Since, therefore, Constantius was out of his way, he quenched his boiling anger upon those who were left, and particularly those who from envy provided the pretext for the murder of Gallus. And immediately he beheaded  
10 Eusebius the *praepositus*, because from the start he appeared to be deeply involved in the murder of Gallus through his slanders. He also condemned Paulus the Spaniard to the fire,

who served as one of the emperor's scribes, because he had caused much suffering to Gallus. He sent both to Chalcedon and there punished each according to their sentence. And he also executed Gaudentius, the general of Africa, and some others who had mistreated him in some way.

(22) But these he punished by letter, whereas the martyr and brave athlete of Christ Artemius, he inhumanely punished himself face to face in Antioch for his confession of Christ, and stripped him of his existing powers, unable to bear his freedom of speech and opposition.

For Julian, as has been shown, when he assumed control of the Roman empire, was especially eager to restore paganism. He therefore sent letters everywhere and gave orders to rebuild their temples and altars with great zeal and enthusiasm, and taking away all the revenues which Constantine the Great and his son Constantius had assigned to the churches, dedicated them to the temples of the demons; instead of bishops, presbyters, and deacons, he appointed temple attendants, temple wardens, sprinklers, sacrificers, basket-bearers, and all the titles that pagan nonsense bestows. These things and others he accomplished in Constantinople.

(23) After this, turning to his mother's brother Julian, who had rejected the Christian religion for his sake and showed great enthusiasm for paganism, he sent him out as governor of the East, what they call count, and instructed him to damage and destroy the fortunes of the churches, and strengthen and promote paganism everywhere and by every means. And he, coming to Antioch, tried by his deeds to appear worthier than his orders, and so appropriated all the treasures from all the churches that existed in silver, gold, and silken robes, and also closed the churches, so that no one could enter them to pray, putting bars and bolts on the gates. So this is what the governor of the East did in Antioch.



(24) The emperor Julian, on the other hand, was still delaying for some time longer in Constantinople, consolidating affairs there in whatever way he thought would most benefit the empire, contemplating and exerting himself as to how he might increase the splendour of paganism. He therefore set out from Constantinople with his whole army and made his way to Syria. Crossing, then, all of Phrygia and reaching its furthestmost city called Iconium, he turned off, leaving Isauria behind. Going over the so-called Taurus, he came to the cities of Cilicia, and drawing near to the travelling station at Issus, camped there, imitating Alexander of Macedon; for there at Issus he, too, organised his war against Darius the king of Persia and made the place famous by defeating him. From there he crossed over the gulf of Issus and came to the city of Tarsus, and thence to Antioch, fulminating against the Christians and threatening to wipe out their name completely.

(25) When, therefore, the tyrant came to the city of Antioch and camped by the imperial palace, he did not rest for a single day, but Eugenius and Macarius, who were presbyters of the church in Antioch, were brought to him as if slandered by some report. The wicked one took his seat at the tribunal and ordered them to present themselves, and said to them: 'Who are you, people, and what sort of life and fate has befallen you, to be brought here before this tribunal?' Eugenius said: 'We are Christians and herdsmen of Christ's flock. This is our life, our fate, and our pursuit.' And the emperor asked: 'Where, then, is Christ's flock, whose herdsmen you happen to be?' And Eugenius answered: 'It is the whole world such as the sun looks upon, and all men that live in it.' Julian said: 'And who do I rule over, whose emperor am I now, o wretched and ill-fated petty man, if Christ has all the land upon which the sun looks as his flock?' And the martyr replied: 'You oversee, o emperor, the very same flock and herd whose herdsmen we also happen to be; for thanks to him, kings reign and tyrants hold sway over the earth; it is him who granted you today this kingdom. And if you showed yourself ungrateful to your benefactor, tomorrow he will once again grant it to someone else;

15 for you are a short-lived creature and you are now reigning over short-lived men. But he possesses a kingdom that is eternal and never has an end.'

(26) And the transgressor said: 'You godless and stranger to the gods' goodwill, Christ appeared yesterday and is short-lived, and although he came to be in the years of Caesar Augustus, do you ordain him today 'eternal' emperor?' The martyr answered: 'Indeed, my emperor, as regards his humanity and the mystery of his inexpressible and ineffable economy,  
5 and therefore of his incarnation, that is the case, for as regards his divine birth from before the ages there can be found no point in time beyond it.

And the transgressor, thinking that Christ's martyr was some uneducated man without a share in the Greek wisdom, said mocking him: 'Surely then, o wretched, this means your Christ was born twice? And if you boast about this, there are also very wise men among the  
10 Greeks who were born not only twice but even three times. For Hermes, the so-called Trismegistus, came to the world and revealed himself three times, as his sacred and admirable books state, and for this reason he is called Trismegistus [Thrice-greatest]. Similarly, Pythagoras, too, who was of a later time than him, also came to life three times: first, he was born as an Egyptian ship-owner, then as Euphorbus, of whom Homer makes mention, and  
15 finally as Pythagoras, the son of Mnesarchus, from Samos.

(27) The martyr laughed at the nonsense, or rather at the ingenious inventions of the wise emperor and the silly talk of the impious Greeks, and realising that the tyrant was trying to ridicule the birth of Christ by these words, said to him with severity and bravery:

'For a start, I should neither have answered you, unlawful one, nor deemed you worthy of  
5 any defence whatsoever, but I said what I said for the sake of the present crowd and the fact that most of them belong to Christ's flock, and now I will continue talking for a little while more, because I am concerned about their salvation. Christ was announced by the prophets from early times and many generations ago, and there are many testimonies to his coming

even in your oracles and the Sibylline letters. And the reason for his incarnation was the  
10 salvation of men and their deliverance from their fallen state. For when he came down to  
earth, he drove away all sickness and all moral weakness, and what is more extraordinary, he  
raised foul-smelling dead with one word of his, and what is indeed most wondrous of all  
things, he suffered the passion of the cross for the salvation of the world and in three days  
rose from the dead in front of five hundred witnesses and with soldiers guarding his tomb, so  
15 that he who wishes to slander his resurrection might not have grounds to do so. And having  
risen from the dead, he appeared to his disciples and lived with them for a whole period of  
forty days; and while they were beholding and seeing him, he was assumed into heaven,  
sending them the gift and power of the Holy Spirit, so that they could speak their opinion in  
foreign tongues and have no need of an interpreter, for the Holy Spirit was speaking inside  
20 them, so that they could foresee distant events and prophesise the future. They came forth to  
announce him everywhere, possessing nothing other than his invisible strength alone and  
holding no shield or spear or sword, but were naked, unarmed, and poor, and yet captured the  
whole world, raising the dead, cleansing the lepers, expelling daemons. And who did all these  
things? Fishermen, illiterate and with no share in the wisdom of this world.

(28) As for those you invoked in order to mock the birth of Christ, men who are wise and  
speak of the gods, as you just said, even if we were to consider that this nonsense were true,  
how did they benefit the world by having been born twice or three or four times, or, at least, a  
small part of the world, or even the smallest one? Who from the books of Hermes and  
5 Pythagoras raised the dead, cleansed the lepers, and expelled the daemons that you worship?  
But Hermes, whom you call Trismegistus, was an Egyptian man, and having been brought up  
according to the laws of the Egyptians, married a woman and fathered children, the eldest of  
whom they call Tat, with whom he conversed and to whom he devoted his discourses, as well

as to Asclepius of Epidaurus, who, according to you, originated the science of medicine, and  
10 to whom he explained his theology, which goes as follows:

‘It is difficult to perceive God, but impossible to make him known; for he is of three substances, an inexplicable essence and nature, which bears no similarity to anything among the mortals. But those whom human being call gods drew upon themselves a great deal of legend and error.’

15 And about the coming of Christ, he, too, uttered some obscure prophecy, not his own, but one he derived from the theology of the Hebrews.

But why am I concerned with the putrid and foul-smelling words of Hermes, which you revere, already long rotten and oozing? For it is impious to ask the dead about the living, when one has the true witnesses in the God-inspired prophecies which announced Christ’s  
20 coming and divinity.

(29) As for Pythagoras, who founded the Italian heresy, what great and wondrous thing did he accomplish coming to life three times? Perhaps that, when he went to Olympia, as you say, he showed his golden thigh to the judges of the games, and when an ox about to be sacrificed bellowed, he said: ‘It possesses the soul of a man most dear to me, and the poor one is calling  
5 me by bellowing’? Or that he made an eagle that was flying high up fall down to earth by a spell?

Such were the wonders that the thrice-born worked when he went to Olympia, mad after fame, the thrice-wretched one, and hallucinating, who established the *tetraktys* as an oath and said it was the source of ever-flowing nature, and who revered beans, because of which he  
10 also perished along with his companions, while he was being pursued by the Tarantines; for he did not want to walk into a field in which beans had happened to be sown, and so was slain with his companions and disciples and fell prey to his enemies. And because Theano, his wife

and disciple, did not want to reveal why they would not eat beans, they had her tongue cut and thus she perished too.

(30) These are the superior virtues of your philosophers, who were born twice and three times, as you yourself said in your speech, while those other miracles, which aim at the salvation and deliverance of the human race, are of my Christ. Pythagoras and Hermes lead the souls of human beings down to the depths of Hades and introduce doctrines about certain  
5 metempsychoses and transmigrations, sometimes transferring them into irrational animals and beasts, and sometimes dragging the soul down into fish and plants and beating it about in yet more cycles and revolutions of time.

But Christ, who is the true and eternal God, created the soul immortal and ageless by the Holy Spirit that exists from the beginning and by his inbreathing, when he created the first  
10 man, as the sacred and unmistakable books of Moses relate. And when it fell with the body through disobedience and the deceit of the soul-corrupting serpent, he came to earth, and having lived with us and showed us the way to salvation through baptism and his resurrection from the dead, brought it back from the depths of Hades to heaven. And when he comes again to judge the living and the dead, he will raise up the bodies and join them to their souls, and  
15 ‘will render to each one according to his deeds’.

(31) After the martyr had philosophised thus, the lawless and apostate Julian said: ‘Do you see, Romans and Greeks, this miscreant and wicked man, how much nonsense he invented against our religion from the knowledge of the Greeks? By the Sun, the gold-gleaming and world-encompassing, who is most dear to me, I will no longer suffer the most godless race of  
5 the Christians to be educated in Greek learning; for behold, this dog also partook of the sacred learning of rhetoric, although not in a right and sound way, but nevertheless poured forth his exaggerated and unpleasant nonsense concerning the history of those holy and philosophical men.’

Having said this, he ordered the martyr to be handed over to his executioners and be  
10 whipped with up to five hundred lashes. They seized him and tortured him inhumanly with  
lashes. And the herald shouted: 'Do the emperor's will, stop the nonsense, and you will be  
delivered from your torturers. The martyr, however, patiently received the blows, keeping  
silence without uttering a sound.

(32) Julian then gazed upon Christ's martyr Macarius and said to him: 'And you, what  
have you got to say about yourself, wretched petty man?' Macarius said: 'You are wretched  
and the most pitiful of all men, filthy and squalid dog. But I am truly blessed and thrice-  
blessed, according to my name, because I confess Christ and venerate the living Son of God  
5 from before the ages. But you renounced him and cleaved to the devil and his angels, the  
destructive and impure daemons, which will escort you to the ever-lasting fire even against  
your will.'

And the Apostate said: 'I know, you wish to die and seek to incite my anger in order that I  
might destroy you sooner. But it is not going to be the way you hoped, most impious one.  
10 First, answer to this and explain: What are your beliefs, o abominable ones, that you accept no  
authority, neither from the emperor nor from any of the governors, and running over to  
everyone and everywhere, are eager to upset the libations and sacrifices to the great gods?  
And you teach men that these are not gods nor saviours of the world nor providers and  
guardians of the human race, they, whom the custom of human beings, handed down from our  
15 fathers from the beginning of the ages, taught us to revere and worship, and proclaim instead  
that Christ, who began to exist yesterday and not long before our generation, is God from  
before the ages and king of all?

(33) Macarius replied: 'Did Eugenius' wise proofs not satisfy you, o most unlawful, that  
you are asking again the same questions about the same things? Yet I, too, will answer the  
same questions about the same things in the same way, since Christ, whom you ridicule and

mockingly scorn, so commands. For he said to his holy disciples: ‘Go therefore and make  
5 disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the  
Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you’, and to avoid  
vain idols and return to the living God ‘who created the heaven and the earth’. For your gods,  
whom you venerate, are the work of daemons, the inventions of myth, and the offspring of  
diabolical activity. For our Scripture says of them: ‘Let the gods that did not make the heaven  
10 and the earth perish.’ But another, imperial, law, which was presented by your kinsman  
Constantine, also rejects their veneration and abolishes the objects related to their worship.  
Because, having believed in Christ, he destroyed all the temples of idols and expressly  
terminated the sacrifices offered to them. What injustice do we, then, commit, o emperor,  
when we confirm and authoritatively assert what God has commanded and a great emperor  
15 has instituted, eliminating and preventing the things that the folly of men of old, as you said,  
contrived through the machinations of the daemons?’

(34) The transgressor replied: ‘But Constantine, most pitiable ones, made innovations on  
account of the profanities he had embraced, and shunned the gods, deceived by you Galileans,  
since he truly lacked education and was accomplished neither in Roman laws nor Greek  
customs. But I, o impious, am perfectly educated in Greek and Roman learning, and trained in  
5 the theologies of the men of old, I mean, Hermes, Orpheus, and Plato, and having become  
familiar not least with the Jewish scriptures and trampled upon their subtleties, I order people  
once again to abide by that most ancient and God-favoured custom and worship handed down  
from our fathers, rather than to follow the folly of uneducated and innovating men. But let  
him also be stripped of his clothing and share the experience of the whip, in order that he  
10 might become wiser and submit to our laws even against his will.

(35) While, then, these men were being inhumanely punished and suffering the heaviest  
blows, the blessed and pious Artemius, as already said, had been appointed by Constantius

*dux* and *augustalis* of all Egypt, and because of his prudent and inimitable deeds, also received the authority to manage the affairs of Syria. Being, therefore, devoted to the Roman  
5 empire and hearing that Julian had become emperor and was hastening to wage war in Persia, when he received letters ordering him to arrive at Antioch with his whole army, he came to Antioch in accordance with his orders, and with due honour and bodyguards stood before the emperor at the platform, while the emperor was leading the lawless interrogation of the holy martyrs.

10 And he said to him: O emperor, why do you so inhumanely mistreat men who are holy and consecrated to God, and force them to deny their faith? Know, then, that you, too, can suffer the like, having a share in the same type of pains, even if God appointed you emperor; if in fact it is from God that you received your empire, and it is not the malicious Devil, the author of evil, who demanded you against us and received you, the all-wicked one, just as once he  
15 demanded and received Job, so as to winnow the wheat of Christ and sow the seed of weeds. But his efforts are in vain, for he no longer has the same power as before. For after Christ came, and the cross was pitched fast in the ground, and Christ was raised on it, the pride of the demons collapsed, their power was trampled down, and their machinations were despised. Do not be deceived, emperor, and do not persecute the God-protected race of Christians by try  
20 to find favour with the demons. Learn, therefore, that the strength and power of Christ are unconquerable and invincible; in any case, you yourself have also been fully assured of this from the oracles which the physician and *quaestor* Oribasius has brought you from Apollo in Delphi. I will recite the oracle to you, even if you do not wish it. It goes as follows:

Tell the king: the cunningly wrought hall has fallen to the ground.

25 Phoebus no longer has a cell, nor the prophetic laurel,  
nor the talking spring, and the talking water is quenched.



(36) When Julian heard these things from the martyr, he was completely astounded. His anger was aroused even more like the flame of a fire that is rekindled and is fuelled from below with more wood, and he shouted aloud with a piercing cry: 'Who and whence is this scoundrel that has deafened us with such a speech at my tribunal?' The guards said: 'He is the  
5 *dux* of Alexandria, master.' And the emperor said: 'Artemius, the villain who mixed a cup of bitter death for my brother?' 'Yes, most valiant of emperors,' they said, 'it is him.' Julian said: 'I owe gratitude to the immortal gods and to Apollo of Daphne, because they have revealed to me this criminal, who has come here on his own account and of his own will.' And he added: 'Let this most impure man be stripped of his rank and the belt be removed  
10 from this scoundrel as a punishment for what he has just dared to do, and as for the murder and blood of my brother, I will appoint his punishment tomorrow, gods willing. For I will destroy him not only with one death, but with thousands and all those of which murderers are worthy; for he did not shed the blood of a common man but of an emperor, and that when he had suffered no injustice from him.'

(37) When the emperor Julian finished his speech, the saint was seized by the bodyguards, and, stripped of his belt and rank, stood naked at the tribunal and was given into the hands of the executioners. After they attached ropes to his hands and feet, they stretched him from his four limbs and beat the martyr's belly and back with ox-hide whips to such an extent that they  
5 changed four pairs of lashes on him. One could see an extraordinary patience that was not human. For he uttered no groan, or cry, or protest, or anything else that men suffer when interrogated by torture, but his face seemed unmoved and unchanging. The ground was soaked with blood. But the martyr looked as if it was someone else suffering, so that all the bystanders were amazed, and even the wicked Julian was astonished at the extraordinary  
10 sight. So he ordered him to be untied and taken to prison with the other martyrs until he

considered how and by what method and with what sort of death he would eliminate the martyrs from the present life.

(38) While being taken to prison, the martyrs of Christ were chanting: 'You have tested us, Lord, and tempered us like silver is tempered. You have brought us into the net, you have heaped afflictions on our backs, you have stood men on our heads.' So it remains that we should go through fire and water, so that you may bring us to relief. When their prayer was  
5 finished, the great Artemius said to himself: Artemius, behold, the marks of Christ's wounds have been engraved upon your body. It remains, therefore, that you should also surrender your very soul along with the rest of your blood.

And recalling that prophetic verse, he said: Behold, 'I have given my back to the whips, and my cheeks to beatings.' But how have I suffered, unworthy as I am, more than my  
10 master? He too was flayed with whips, his face also took beatings and blows, and he suffered strikes all over his body, and wore a crown of thorns, and with his hands tied behind him was fixed naked to the cross on account of my sin and transgression, he who knew no sin and spoke no deceit with his mouth. The sufferings of my Lord were, therefore, many; I, the wretched one, am far from his magnanimity and forbearance. So I rejoice and exult,  
15 brightened by the sufferings of my Lord. The imitation of his passion relieves my pain and the equal honour brought by things superior lightens my grief. I too through him became a son of God through baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit, and will be even more so through the resurrection from the dead. I thank you, Lord, because you have crowned me with your sufferings. But, you who are benevolent and compassionate and provide for your servants,  
20 bring my contest to an end in confession of you, and do not judge me unworthy of this undertaking because of the sins that have accrued to me in this life. For I, Lord, have thrown myself upon your compassionate feelings.

(39) When he had prayed these things to himself, he arrived at the prison with the holy martyrs Eugenius and Macarius, and they were handed to the gaoler. And the martyr of Christ was with the prize-bearing saints Eugenius and Macarius, praising and giving thanks to God. When morning came, once again the transgressor ordered the martyrs to stand in the court, and deeming them worthy of no interrogation, except for the great Artemius, whom he ordered to be separated from their company, voted exile for them and sent them to Oasis in Arabia. There are two places called this way, small Oasis and great Oasis, destructive places blasted by destructive winds; none of those who have gone there has survived for even one year, but, caught by deadly diseases, they die there. Having, then, banished the saints Eugenius and Macarius there, he ordered the martyrs to be beheaded at that place; they were executed after forty days, on the twentieth of December. In the place of their death a great miracle took place; for although the place had no water at all, a spring of water that expels every disease gushed forth, which survives to this day, preserving the name of the martyrs.

(40) Having called saint Artemius forward, he said to him: Because of your impetuosity, you have forced me to dishonour your ancestry, insult your dignity, and lay violent hands upon your very flesh. So obey me, Artemius, and come forward and sacrifice to the gods, especially to Apollo of Daphne, my thrice-beloved and wholly admirable god, and I will acquit you of the charge of murdering my brother and restore you to a greater and more glorious rank. For I will appoint you prefect of the praetorians and archpriest of the great gods, and name you my father, having the second place in my empire, and will be with me every year of my life and administration. For you know yourself, Artemius, that my brother was murdered by Constantius without reason, that envy killed him, and that the eunuch Eusebius, that most unholy of all men, who was wrongly invested with the office of *praepositus*, although it was not suitable for him, has paid the penalty for his sacrilegious crime, the utterly wicked one.

(41) You also know that emperorship is more fitting for my family; for my father Constantius was born to my grandfather Constans from Theodora, Maximian's daughter. Constantine, however, was born to him from Helena, a vulgar woman and no different from common women, and this happened when he was not yet Caesar, but in the position of a private citizen. Constantine, then, snatched the empire by boldness of opinion, and unjustly killed my father and his two brothers. And his son Constantius, imitating his father, killed my brother Gallus, even after he had sworn most terrible oaths to him, and if I had not been saved by the providence of the gods, he would have wanted to do the same to me, but the gods prevented him, by declaring my safety before my very eyes. In these gods I have found courage, and so I rejected Christianity and inclined to the Hellenic life, knowing well that the most ancient lifestyle of the Greeks and Romans employed good customs and laws, and that it addressed as gods those who earned our trust and faith through their actions.'

(42) For who could have doubts when he sees the sun riding across the heaven and the moon being drawn by a golden-railed chariot of oxen? The one makes the day shine and rouses men to work, while the other lights up the night and brightens the stars and with unsleeping rays of light urges men to sleep. This is the theology of the Greeks and Romans, Artemius, and not unjustifiably, but rightfully and with fair judgement. For what is more far-shining than the sun or more luminous than the moon, or what is more pleasant and comelier than the dance of the stars? These then the Greeks and Romans worship and revere and to them they have attached their hopes. And they call the sun Apollo, and the moon Artemis, and the greatest of the stars, which they call the planets, holding the seven zones of heaven, they name one as Cronus, one as Zeus, another as Hermes, and also as Ares and Aphrodite. For they manage the whole world and everything under heaven is administered by their powers. So men have set up images of them and worship and honour them, and at the same time they have invented certain myths for their own amusement. But they do not honour their images as

gods – heaven forbid! For this is what the more naive and rustic sort of people believe – since  
15 those who embrace philosophy and accurately examine the affairs of the gods know to whom  
they pay their honour and to whom passes the veneration of divine statues.

(43) ‘So I encourage you, a noble man, to join me and do what is pleasing to me, and to  
follow properly the Greek religion, and adhere to the ancient customs and practices. For  
Constantine, as you yourself know, who was very easy to deceive among men and proved to  
be uneducated and stupid, introduced innovations in religion, and failed to observe the Roman  
5 laws and inclined towards Christianity. He was afraid of his unholy deeds and feared that the  
gods drove him from the flock as accursed and unworthy of their religion, being full of his  
family’s blood. For he killed his brothers who had done nothing out of place, and his wife  
Fausta, and his own son Priscus who was a good and noble man. The gods were disgusted at  
these unholy crimes and excluded him from their flock, and made him wander far and away  
10 from their holy and sacred religion, and they obliterated his cursed and profane seed and his  
whole family from among mankind.

Therefore, excellent man, seeing your steadfastness and firmness in all things, I want you  
to become a friend, a co-inheritor and a companion in my share and my fellowship, regarding  
all of the affairs of the empire. Come here then, Artemius, and stand among us men, and  
15 refuse Christ, and return to the ancestral and most ancient and long-standing religion of the  
Romans and Greeks, and enjoy with me the gifts made to us by the gods, and share in the  
highest honours and dignities.’

(44) The martyr of Christ paused and reflected for a little while, and then summoning all  
his reason and thoughts, he replied to that speech: Regarding my religion and faith, o  
emperor, I will give you no defence for the moment because I have at hand proofs of it. With  
regard to the death of your brother, I will say this in my defence, that I will never be shown to  
5 have harmed his soul, either in deed or word or by some plot of my mind, not even if you

were to exhaust yourself a thousand times in investigating this, for the truth is unalterable. I knew that he was a Christian, dear to God and just, and very keen and enthusiastic about the laws of Christ. Let heaven be witness, and earth, and the whole chorus of holy angels, and Christ the Son of God, whom I worship with my spirit, that I am innocent of his bloodshed  
10 and death, and I did not contribute to his unfair murder along with the unholy men who committed it. For I was not present with Constantius then, but was living in Egypt and spent my time there until this year. This is my defence concerning your brother.

(45) As for renouncing Christ and embracing a Greek lifestyle, I will give you this answer, borrowing the voice of the three boys before Nebuchadnezzar: let it be known to you, my emperor, that I do not worship your gods, and I will never revere the golden image of your beloved Apollo. And because you insulted the blessed Constantine, the greatest of all  
5 emperors, and his family, and called him the enemy of your gods and a maniac who is full of murder and steeped in his family's blood, I will say these things in his defence: it was rather your father Constantius and his brothers that started the wrongdoing, by mixing a poisonous drug for him and causing him a destructive death, when they had suffered no wrong from him. Constantine did kill his wife Fausta and very rightly so, since she had imitated Phaedra of old,  
10 and slandered his son Priscus accusing him of being in love with her and of mistreating her by force, just as Phaedra slandered Theseus' son Hippolytus. And so according to the laws of nature, as a father he punished his son. Later, however, he learnt the truth and killed her too, passing the most righteous judgement against her.

He inclined towards Christ, when he called him from heaven, while fighting his fierce and  
15 heavy battle against Maxentius, and showed him the sign of the cross in the middle of the day, shining out more than the sun in brightness, and indicated in Roman letters by means of the stars his victory in the war. We ourselves saw the sign, being present in the battle, and read

the writing. But the whole army saw it too, and there are many witnesses of this in your army, if in fact you wanted to ask them.

(46) And why do I say this? The prophets from early times announced Christ, as you yourself know quite well. And there are many testimonies of his presence even from the gods revered by you and the prophecies of the oracles, both the Sibylline books and the poetry of Virgil the Roman which you call bucolic. And Oracular Apollo himself who is admired by  
5 you uttered the following sort of words about Christ. For when asked by his attendants, he answered as follows:

‘You should not have asked me in my last and final moments,

O ill-fated one among my servants, about the holy god

and the spirit that holds all things around in a cluster,

10 the stars, the light, the rivers and Tartarus, the air and fire,

which against my will chases me from this temple;

the time of my tripods is now over,

alas, alas, my tripods, grieve for me, Apollo now departs,

he departs, since a mortal, a light from heaven, forces me;

15 he who suffered is god, but divinity itself did not suffer.’

(47) The transgressor answered and said: ‘I think, Artemius, that you have not been a general in Egypt but some kind of soothsayer, or rather an altar thief or a begging-priest who collects the fables of drunken old women and ancient, age-old myths.’ And the martyr said:

‘You have not understood well, my king, nor in accordance with your wisdom and virtue. I

5 produce proofs from your own gods and the teachings that are dear to you, that you may learn the mystery of truth from what is familiar to you, and do not think that I am taking pride in the sayings of the pagans, ‘for let not the oil of the sinner anoint my head’. But caring for the salvation of your soul I leave no stone unturned that you may be persuaded. For I understand

that, just as Satan blinded the first-formed Adam of old through his disobedience and the  
10 tasting of the tree, so, king, envying your salvation he has also stripped you of your faith in  
Christ.

As for the fact that you call the sun and the moon and the stars your gods, I am ashamed at  
your profession of ignorance, or rather of ill-advisedness. Did not Anaxagoras of Clazomenae,  
clearly your teacher, say that the sun was a red-hot mass and the stars were bodies of pumice-  
15 stone and entirely lifeless and senseless? How then do you, best and most philosophic of  
kings, call gods what has been rejected and disproved by your teachers? For I know that you  
belong to the Platonic school. And Plato was a disciple of Socrates, and Socrates of  
Archelaus, and Archelaus and Pericles of Anaxagoras. How then, O excellent, do you call  
these things gods and above them all hail the sun and swear the imperial oath by it, and at the  
20 top and bottom of your letters and speeches and in your greetings you often say ‘by the sun’?  
But why must I speak at great length? I do not reject my Christ, may it never happen! I do not  
welcome the abominable impiety of the pagans. But I shall remain firm in what I was taught,  
and hold fast to the ancestral traditions, which time shall not overthrow, ‘even if wisdom has  
been discovered through consummate wit’, to quote something from your poet Euripides.’

(48) Julian was dazzled by these words and was at a complete loss, and did not know what  
he should do, admiring the martyr’s erudition and eloquence and his ready reply and defence  
against everything. And so the martyr of Christ said to him: ‘Abandon, O emperor, the dead  
and swollen religion of the Greeks – for it decayed a long time ago – and come over to Christ.  
5 For he is magnanimous and benevolent and accepts your error.’ But it was not possible to  
check the impulses of his malevolent spirit, nor recall a soul heading at a rush on its own will  
towards destruction.

Julian’s soul had long been in labour with paganism because of the philosophical contact  
he had in Ionia with Maximus, but as long as his brother was around and after him



10 Constantius, he was not brave enough to reveal anything because of his fear of them. But when these were no longer among men and he himself was now master of imperial affairs, then indeed he openly laid himself bare and all at once broke out into every kind of enthusiasm for paganism.

(49) He therefore replied to the martyr: 'Since you have denigrated my arguments, wicked man, and have dared to seduce me to the faith of the Christians, I give you this instead of the gifts which I promised.' And so he ordered the martyr to be stripped and his flanks to be pierced through with burning iron awls and his back to be spiked with sharp nails and split  
5 open while he was dragged along on his back. But although these tortures had been brought upon the martyr in quick succession, he had the same steadfastness as before, and as if someone else's body was suffering, and he seemed like a spectator and did not suffer any pain. And while the martyr was being tortured over many hours and uttered not one cry or groan, Julian clapped his hands and, as having been defeated, rose up from the tribunal and  
10 ordered the martyr to be led away again to the prison and that neither bread nor water should be given to him nor anything that men take to sustain life. And he himself headed to Daphne, the fairest place in Antioch.

(50) Around midnight while the martyr was praying in prison, Christ appeared to him and said to him: 'Artemius, be a man, and be strong, and do not be afraid or fear the tyrant. For I am with you to rescue you from every temptation and every pain of torture, and I will crown you in the kingdom of the heavens, and 'just as you confessed me before men on earth, so  
5 shall I confess you before my Father in heaven.' So take courage and rejoice.' For you will be with me in Paradise. When the martyr heard this from the Lord he was confident, and all night gave glory and thanks to God. For he recovered from his blows and wounds, so that not even a bruise appeared on his holy body. He spent fifteen days without tasting anything at all. For he was nourished by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

(51) Julian set off for the suburb of Daphne, as we have already said, preparing sacrifices to Apollo and expecting to receive oracles from him. Daphne is a suburb of Antioch, situated on its highest areas, covered with every kind of woods. For the place is rich in wood and fruit, where an extraordinary number of every kind of tree and especially cypress has grown, 5 incomparable in beauty, height and size. And it has everywhere streams of drinkable water, for large springs gush out there, thanks to which the city seems to be one of a few with an abundance of water. And on top of that the place is luxuriously adorned with splendid buildings like villas, baths and other constructions, both for use and for adornment. Here there were also temples and statues of other demons and especially that of Apollo which had been 10 worshipped from ancient times. For it was here that pagan myth fashioned the misfortune that befell the virgin Daphne, and it is still, in fact, believed that the place carries her name.

(52) The statue of Apollo was of the following kind in terms of manufacture: the body was constructed out of vine-wood, assembled with stunning skill so that its shape had coherence, while the surrounding mantle was covered in gold and it harmonised in a kind of inexpressible beauty with the parts of his body which were left exposed and without gold. And it stood with 5 a lyre in its hands and represented a leading singer. Its hair and crown of laurel adorned promiscuously the golden parts, since it should glow gracefully in the eyes of the beholders. Two great precious hyacinth stones filled the hollows of his eyes in memory of the boy Hyacinthus of Amyclae, and the beauty of the gems and their size were the most important ornament to the statue. For the makers of the statue exerted themselves in increasing its 10 dignity, so that as many as possible might be deceived by it, being attracted by the great beauty of its outward appearance in order to venerate it. This indeed was what had happened to Julian: for he paid homage to it more than all the other statues, and sacrificed many thousands of each species to it.

(53) Even though Julian did everything and took a lot of trouble in order for the statue to give an oracle response, when there was none and this statue and all the others there kept completely silent, he considered that he needed the help of magic which the pagans call hierourgy. So he sent for a certain Eusebius who held the greatest reputation among the pagans for his ability at this, and he ordered him to bring it to life as much as possible and make it active, without omitting anything that he considered necessary for this purpose. When he had applied all his methods and was left with nothing further that he could think of, and the statue naturally remained silent in the same way, making no more utterance than before, he was then asked by Julian why it was particularly silent even though they had applied to it all the methods they had considered. And he said that Babylas was the chief cause of the silence of this statue and of the others, since the gods loathed his corpse lying there in Daphne and for this reason could not bear to visit the food offerings. For he did not wish to tell the real reason, of which he was not at all ignorant, namely that there was a superior power which had shackled the activity of the demons; since, above all, the demon pretending to be Apollo had clearly and expressly said, as it is said, that he was not able to respond because of Babylas.

(54) For this Babylas is said to have been a bishop of Antioch. When Numerian once wished to enter into a Christian church on a feast day, Babylas stood before him and prevented him from going inside, saying he would not watch a wolf coming among the flock. So he was driven away from the entrance, either because he sensed a riot on the part of the people or because he changed his mind. He was offended, however, by the resistance of the bishop and ordered for him to be brought to the tribunal and answer for his actions. When he appeared there, he brought charges against him for daring to block his way, but then also ordered him to sacrifice to the gods, if he wanted to avoid a trial for his crimes. Babylas answered the charges and avoided the provocation, the first, by saying that it is appropriate for a shepherd to be ready to do anything for his flock, the second, by not choosing to sacrifice to

fake and destructive demons. Then Numerian, since he saw that he did not obey, gave the order to tie him with chains and shackles and send him to death by beheading. And he, knowing that he would die, pick up these words from the psalms: 'Return, my soul, to your resting place, for the Lord is your benefactor.'

(55) They say that there were also three boys, young in age, who were brothers and were being reared by him, and that they were also arrested by the emperor, since they too refused to sacrifice, even though every kind of force had been used on them, and so the emperor ordered them to be beheaded as well. When they arrived at the appointed place, Babylas put them in  
5 front of him and led them first to the sword, lest any of them shrink back and avoid death, and while they were being decapitated, he said these words, 'Here am I, and the children God has given me.' Then he himself offered his neck to the sword, having charged those who would gather up his body to bury the chains and shackles with him, 'that they may adorn me,' he said, 'where I lie.' And until today he is still buried with them, it is said.

10 When Julian learned from Eusebius that this Babylas was preventing the statues from giving an oracular response, he immediately ordered that the coffin, which was made out of a large stone, should be removed from Daphne to some distant point by those that cared for it and transfer it wherever they wanted. Immediately the crowd of the city poured out as for an important cause, and surrounded the coffin and were carrying it. And it was as if it was not  
15 being dragged by men but rather as if it was being moved by some superior force, and it went along following the enthusiasm of those who were bearing it. Indeed on the same day they carried it further than fifty stades and placed it in the so-called 'cemetery'. This is a house outside the city which has received many bodies of men of old and in fact of a few who were martyred for their piety. So at that point they conveyed the coffin inside it.

(56) Julian in the meantime prepared a multitude of victims and offerings so that on the following day he might go up to Daphne with them, hoping that now he would definitely

obtain a response from Apollo by all means, if not from the others. For the focus of his enthusiasm and his effort were towards Apollo since his interest was in him rather than any other both on account of his oracular skill and because the place, Daphne, was sacred to him, for he considered that he rather than any of the other deities would most probably prevail on his own territory. Eusebius and the so-called priests and the throng of temple attendants gathered in a large crowd to receive the emperor, and they stayed awake around the statue and exerted themselves in every way, so that when Julian arrived he would obtain an utterance, since no other excuse was now left them for a delay.

When the night was well advanced, fire suddenly fell from heaven and struck the temple, instantly enveloping it on all sides, and set alight the statue along with the offerings. All was ablaze and the flames shot up ever higher, when suddenly a great cry broke out around the temple and an uproar like no other; and although many were eager to lend their aid, there was no one who could prevail against the fire. Some ran to the city to inform Julian the Praefectus Orientis, while the rest of the crowd stood confused and became spectators of the disaster that had overwhelmed them so unexpectedly. But the fire touched none of the other temples despite the density and the abundance of woodland growth there, because it fell only upon the temple of Apollo and consumed it along with its contents. Consequently, the statue and all its offerings disappeared completely, and only the mere foundations of the buildings were left as reminders of the disaster; and even now they can be seen, as clear proof of the fire sent by God.

(57) When Julian heard about these events, he was filled with rage, and because he considered it terrible that the Christians should laugh at the events, he immediately ordered to drive them out of the great church and declare that it was totally inaccessible to them, since they would shut it off as securely as possible, and to confiscate all its treasures. He also granted the pagans permission to enter into the churches of the Christians and do whatever

they wished. So when these orders were issued by the tyrannical and impious Julian, what great evil was not committed? What discordant words were not uttered by those who speak the unspeakable against the Christian faith with loose tongues and blaspheme our Lord and God Jesus Christ in all the cities? For in Sebaste, the Samaria of older times, which has by  
10 now been rebuilt by Herod and renamed Sebaste, they removed the bones of the prophet Elisha and of John the Baptist from their tombs and after mixing them with the bones of unclean animals, they burnt them and scattered the dust into the air. And the statue of the Saviour in the city of Paneas, which had been made with splendour by the haemorrhaging woman whom Christ cured, and had been erected in a prominent place in the city that later  
15 became well known from the miracle of the grass growing on that spot, was removed by the Christians and set up in the sacristy of the church. This statue the pagans pulled down and fastened ropes to its feet and dragged it to the market-place until it broke up little by little and disappeared; only its head was left, which was carried off by someone during the tumult caused by the pagans, while they uttered blasphemous and disgraceful words to our Lord  
20 Jesus Christ, such as no one had ever heard.

(58) The most impious Julian himself and most lawless of all exulted and rejoiced, and priding himself on all this, gave also orders to erect the Jewish temple in Jerusalem; and he expelled the Christians from the city and gave it to the Jews to settle in, sending a certain Alypius to rebuild the temple with haste.

5 He then sat at the tribunal in the so-called basilica and ordered the martyr to be brought before him. When the saint was brought forward, he said to him: 'By all means you too have heard, most impious Artemius, of the audacious act of those impious Christians like yourself, which they committed in Daphne in the temple of the saviour Apollo, and how they set fire to his temple together with its offerings, and destroyed the most honourable and marvellous

10 statue. But they will not take pleasure in mocking and ridiculing our own matters. For I shall take vengeance for this ‘seventy times seven’ to quote your scriptures.’

(59) And the martyr replied: ‘I heard that god-sent anger and fire came down from heaven and devoured your god, and burnt his entire temple and demolished it. If then he was a god, why did he not save himself from the fire?’ The Apostate said: ‘It seems to me that perhaps you too, most impious, are mocking and laughing at these events, as if you have received  
5 some vengeance from your God.’ The martyr answered: ‘I, godless man, always boast and rejoice and exult at the fall of the daemons honoured by you and I take joyful delight in all the miracles that my Christ works. The vengeance for the things that you have done to me, I will receive there, when that never-sleeping fire and the everlasting punishment seize you. And then not much time will pass before your memory and every trace of it shall disappear with  
10 noise.’ The Apostate replied: ‘If you rejoice, then, and take pleasure in these things, impious one, I will add to the pleasure you desire. But I am sparing you, wretched one, through my own goodness, and I want you to cease from your folly and be of sound reason, and come forth and sacrificing to the immortal gods. For you have been endowed with the greatest position, and plenty of wealth has been piled up for you from above and from your ancestors,  
15 and the gods have prepared for you many gifts of virtue, even if you have shown yourself ungrateful towards them.’

(60) The saint replied: ‘Why are you raging, lawless one, and are spending time on these destructive speeches? You allowed the barbarian revolts, and took up the war against the Persians, through which you shook the whole world, and you spend time on me, the servant of God? Issue whatever decision you like against me. For I am not going to worship your gods, nor  
5 am I going to yield to your orders, but I offer my God every day a sacrifice of praise and confession. Do then what you will, lawless one.’

When Julian heard this, he was filled with anger, and he ordered stonecutters and masons to come in, and said to them: ‘Do you see that steep rock opposite the theatre which hangs downhill over the city? Split it and raise up one part of it, and put this criminal in between.

10 And breaking the chains of the rock, let it with its force and weight return to the part it was split from, and since he lies wholly in the middle he will be totally crushed into pieces, and his inner parts will all be torn apart, in order that he may know whom he is opposing and against whom he has armed for a fight, and what benefit he will receive from his God, if in fact he can seize him from my hands.’ The action was finished sooner than his sentence and  
15 after the martyr was placed between the rocks, the stone-cutters let go the rock as the tyrant had said. And the rock with all its weight it fell downwards and covered the martyr’s whole body, and pressed him so much that as his bones shattered a terrible and violent crackling sound was heard, strange to the human ear.

(61) The saint was compressed and crushed between the rocks, invoking Christ and saying: ‘You have uplifted me on a rock and guided me, because you have been my hope, my tower of strength before the face of my enemy. You have set my feet on a rock, and directed my steps. So receive my spirit, only-begotten Son, you who know my distress, and do not place  
5 me into the hands of my enemies.’ For all his inner parts were ruptured and the joints of his bones had been torn apart, and his eyeballs had leapt from their sockets. But even so Christ’s brave warrior was enduring, like an unmalleable anvil or a hard stone tougher than any steel. After the saint spent a day and a night between the rocks, the lawless Julian ordered the rocks to be separated, expecting him to be found broken and crushed and dead. But when the rocks  
10 were opened, Artemius came out walking, his eyes leaping forth and having left their sockets – he was a horrifying sight and a strange example of the human nature: a man naked, his bones ground and their joints shattered, but he walked and conversed and replied to the tyrant.



(62) When the abominable Julian saw him, he was totally amazed and said to those present: 'Do you see that strange sight and unnatural example of the human nature? Is he really not a sorcerer and magician? Is this not an apparition and proof of the deceiving demons? Now I believe that Euripides was wise and had knowledge of many things, having  
5 said these wise words in the Orestes: 'There is by no means a word so terrible to say, nor any suffering or disaster sent by the gods, the burden of which the nature of man may not bear.' By the immortal and invincible gods, I did not expect, friends, that this defiled and sinful man would still belong to the living. But now, even though his inner parts have broken forth and his whole body is shattered, he is moving and speaking. But the gods have preserved him to  
10 teach many men, to be a bogeyman to those who do not honour their otherworldly power.' And he said to the martyr: 'See, wretch, you have been deprived of your eyes and all your limbs have been disabled. What hope is there left in whom you have hoped in vain? Call upon the kind will of the gods. Perhaps they will be merciful to you and not surrender you to the punishments in Hades.'

(63) When the martyr of Christ heard about 'punishment' he smiled and said to the harsh and merciless tyrant: 'Your gods will surrender me to punishments? And how will they, abominable man, who cannot escape from their own punishment, be able to help others? Everlasting fire has been prepared for them, for them is Tartarus and the worms, and the  
5 gnashing of teeth that never stops. With them you too will be handed to the eternal and never-ceasing fire, where you will be punished for ever, because you trampled on the Son of God, and the venerable blood which he poured out for our sake you treated as common, and insulted the Spirit of grace in which you were sanctified, obeying destructive demons. But to me, because of this little toil and worthless punishment which you have brought upon me,  
10 many rewards and crowns of victory will be given in return, which I will put on when I lie in the undefiled wedding chamber with Christ, and the Lord Christ will garland my head with a

crown far greater than the ephemeral one which you wear. But why should I say all this to you, the impious wicked tyrant? Stand away from me, lawless and most unholy of all men. Give whatever sentence you like on me, whatever Satan who dwells in your soul instils in  
15 you. For I oppose your will, and do not yield to your orders. Do what you will, lawless man.'

(64) When the apostate Julian, who is a stranger to God, heard these things from the martyr, he pronounced this sentence against him: 'For Artemius, who insulted the gods and trampled on the Roman laws and ours, and confessed himself a Christian instead of a Roman and a Greek, and called himself a Galilaean instead of *dux* and *augustalis*, we have passed a  
5 decree ordering that his defiled head be cut off by the sword.' The Christ's martyr accepted this sentence, he left the tribunal with the soldiers that were carrying him away, exulting and rejoicing, singing hymns and glorifying Christ the king. When they reached the place where the Christ's martyr was to meet his end, he said to the soldiers leading him: 'Brothers, I beseech you, give me some time to pray.' And they said to him: 'Do as your mind  
10 commands.' And the saint turned to the east, and spread out his hands to the heavens, and prayed as follows:

(65) 'I give thanks to you, Lord and Saviour of those who invoke your name in truth, because you strengthened me your unworthy servant to tread down the goads of the devil and destroy his snares which he laid beneath my feet and put to shame the wicked Julian, who skipped away from your dominion and attached himself to the Devil and those who hate you,  
5 and trampled on your holy laws and defiled your divine commandments. I give you thanks, merciful one, because you looked upon my humility, and did not shut into the hands of my enemies, but placed my feet in a broad place and have directed my steps. I give you thanks, only-begotten Word of the Father, because you found me worthy of the prize of the call above, and of the chorus of your saints, and ended my life in confession of you, and ridiculed  
10 those who rose up against me.

And now I call upon you, Lord, look upon me and upon my humble words, and grant relief to your inheritance, because it has grown weak and you have not restored it. For behold your enemies have shouted and those who hate you have raised their head. They have made evil plans against your people and have plotted against your saints. For they said “Come, we shall  
15 obliterate them, and Christ’s name shall no longer be remembered.” It is for this that Julian boasts, what he takes confidence in. This is his threat to your people and to your inheritance for the sake of which you poured out your blood.

For behold, your altars have been razed to the ground, your sanctuary has been set on fire, the dignity of your house has been obliterated, and the blood of your covenant has come to  
20 nothing because of our sins and the blasphemies that Arius poured out against you, the only-begotten, and against your Holy Spirit, depriving you of your consubstantiality with the Father and alienating you from his nature, calling you a creation, you the creator of the whole creation, and placing beneath time you who created the ages, saying this: ‘There was a time when the Son did not exist,’ and calling you, the lawless one, the Son of will and volition. But  
25 that impious man found the reward for his own mouth and wicked tongue, even if his blasphemies remain, bearing for him the fruit of eternal and unending punishment.

But you, magnanimous, halt the tyranny against us, and quell your righteous indignation and anger which we kindled by enraging you, Lord. Smash the fortresses of idolatry. Extinguish the altars of the idols and put an end to the savour of impure blood sacrifices, so  
30 that a pure and bloodless sacrifice may be offered to you in every place of your sovereignty, so that your most holy name may be glorified, of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and forever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.’

(66) He knelt three times and lay prostrate towards the east, and prayed again saying: ‘God of God, the One of the One, king of kings, who are in heaven and are seated at the right hand of God the Father who gave you birth, who dwelled on earth for the salvation of us all, the crown of those who fight piously for you, listen to me your humble unworthy servant and in  
5 peace accept my soul and let it rest with the saints who have pleased you throughout the ages and glorified your holy name, that of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and forever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.’

And a voice came from heaven saying: ‘Artemius, your prayer has been heard, and the grace of healing has been granted to you. Hasten then your course and end your fight. Come  
10 in together with the saints and enjoy the prize which has been prepared for the saints and for all those who have loved the presence of Christ. The lawless king will fall in Persia and will become a victim for sacrifice to the impure demons that he worshipped and honoured, obtaining such a reward from them, and another will reign in his place, a true Christian and most pious, who will shatter and crush all the objects of worship of the idols. The people of  
15 God will rejoice and all the churches will be freed from idolatry, and a profound peace will encompass the whole world, and the name of Christ will be raised and magnified from end to end of the world. For idolatry will no longer raise its head, nor will Satan be given any room to disturb the foundation of the Church. For the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.’

(67) The blessed Artemius heard these words from the divine voice and received knowledge of the things that were about to happen, and gave thanks to God, full of joy and happiness, and bent his neck. Then one of the soldiers came to him and cut off his holy head, on the twentieth of October, the sixth day of the week, the so-called ‘day of preparation’.

5 A pious woman called Ariste, a deaconess of the Church of Antioch requested his blessed and holy body from the emperor Julian. And he granted allowed for it to be given to her. She made a coffin and anointed his holy and blessed body with valuable scents and myrrh and laid

it in the coffin, and sent it off to the prosperous city Constantinople, placing it in a conspicuous place, since she wanted a home worthy of the saint and great martyr Artemius, so  
10 that gatherings could take place in memory of his famous martyrdom. All this was done in Antioch the greatest city of Syria, under Julian Caesar, called the Apostate, when Dulcitius was proconsul, and Salustius held the position of prefect, in the place called Daphne, while the Lord and God and our Saviour Jesus Christ reigned over us, to whom the glory and the power now and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

(68) Because we said further above that the Apostate Julian had sent orders to Jerusalem for the rebuilding of the temple of the Jews, which Vespasian and his son Titus had destroyed and burnt along with the city, as the Lord Christ had predicted about it to his sacred disciples, namely that ‘no stone will be left on top of another stone that will not be destroyed’, when the  
5 lawless one wished to prove false the words of Christ, he hastened to build the temple and ordered that all the expenses of the building should be covered with public sources and money. So the Jews assembled and began the works with great joy, digging the ditch for the foundations with silver buckets and spades, and when they were about to lay the foundations, a powerful rainstorm came down and filled in the gap. While lightning and thunders were  
10 constantly striking down during that whole night, there was an earthquake as the day was approaching, so that many even of those who had stayed in open air lost their lives. And a fire came up from the foundations that had been dug up and burnt all those who found themselves there. It happened also that some cities collapsed: Nicopolis and Neapolis, Eleutheropolis and Gaza, and many others. A colonnade at Aelia, that is in Jerusalem, next to the synagogue of  
15 the Jews, fell down and killed many of those mentioned, and a fire broke out unexpectedly and burnt very many Jews. There was also darkness in those places and continual earthquakes, causing much destruction in many cities.

(69) Julian set out from Antioch with all his army and marched against the land of Persia.

And when he had captured the city of Ctesiphon, he thought he had accomplished a great deed to be able to move on to a greater one. But the abominable man did not realise he had been deceived. For having acquired a devilish love for idolatry and hoping to have a long reign  
5 through his godless gods and become a new Alexander, and also to overcome the Persians and to obliterate the name and race of the Christians, he fell short of his proud planning. For he met an aged Persian and was tricked by him in his attempt to capture without effort the kingdoms of the Persians and all their wealth; the man, then, led him into the Carmanian desert into roadless regions, ravines and deserts and waterless areas with all his army, and  
10 when he had forced them to thirst and hunger and killed all their cavalry, the Persian confessed that he had deliberately deceived them so that they might be destroyed by him and he might not view his own native land captured by its worst enemies. And so they immediately cut his limbs and sent him to his death.

But right after these hardships they encountered against their will the army of the Persians,  
15 and in the battle that took place, while Julian himself was rushing here and there making arrangements, he fell to the spear, so some say, of a soldier, or according to others, to that of a Saracen among the Persians. But according to the true account of the Christians and ours, the spear belonged to the Lord Christ set against him. For a bow stretched out from the air suddenly and an arrow was let come down on him as if on purpose, which pierced through his  
20 flanks and wounded him in the abdomen. And he wailed deeply and woefully and thought that our Lord Jesus Christ was standing before him and exulting over him. But he, filled with darkness and madness, received his own blood in his hand and sprinkled it into the air, and when he was about to die shouted out, saying, ‘You have won, Christ. Take your fill, Galilaean.’ And thus meeting a most hateful death he ended his life after many reproaches  
25 upon his own gods.

(70) When the transgressor fell in the space between the two armies, Jovian was proclaimed emperor by the army. And making a peace treaty with the Persians, he surrendered Nisibis without its inhabitants to the Persians and left from there, for the army was being destroyed by hunger and disease.

But when he returned to Roman territory, he joined the heresy of the Anomoeans, that is to say the Eunomians. And when he reached the province of Galatia, there in a place called Dadastana, he suddenly ended his life. And so the people were left without an emperor for forty days, until the army came to Nicaea and proclaimed Valentinian. Valentinian proclaimed his own brother emperor on the twenty-fifth of February, after thirty-two days of his own rule.

When, then, the bishops of the pure and right faith met with Valentinian, they requested that a council should be held. And he answered them that 'God has granted to me to manage the affairs of the world, while to you the churches; I, therefore, have nothing to do with this matter. So meet and hold the council wherever it seems best to you. – He said this, then, while his views were still right and not yet corrupted. The bishops then gathered in Lampsacus, which is a city of the Hellespont, and summed up the orthodox dogmas of the faith, and commending the faith of Lucianus the martyr, they anathematised the Anomoean doctrine, and subscribing to the faith earlier laid down by the holy fathers in Nicaea, they sent out to all the churches.

But the emperor Valens was drawn to the Anomoean heresy, and the bishops once again began to be persecuted and banished, with Eudoxius along with Aetius, Eunomius, and the rest of the heretics who represented the Anomoean heresy, being the leaders. For this and for their treacherous seeds, they obtained the prize of hell from Christ, our benevolent Lord. So this is what took place, and let us, who worship the Holy Trinity, give glory to Christ, our true Lord, along with the Father and the Holy Spirit for all ages upon ages. Amen.

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